

The Eucharist in the Life of St. Margaret Mary

By

Joseph Dargaud



**THE EUCHARIST IN THE LIFE
OF ST. MARGARET MARY**



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Sainte Marguerite-Marie et l'Eucharistie

Paray-le-Monial, 1921

by Brother Richard Arnandez, FSC

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FOREWORD

When our Lord chooses someone for a particular mission he endows that person with the graces and virtues especially needed to fulfill that mission. In choosing St. Margaret Mary, it is evident that the Sacred Heart wished to enkindle divine love in a world grown cold through sin and indifference. The mention of St. Margaret Mary immediately recalls the revelations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to her. It is important to study how she prepared for her unique mission. She has left us a good description of herself in her autobiography, letters and poems which are available in English. One thing really stands out in her spirituality: her love for the Sacrament of Love. All her writings are filled with love and zeal for the Sacrament of the Altar.

It must be kept in mind that Margaret Mary Alacoque was a saint and therefore her spiritual aspirations were not ordinary, but extraordinary. Her language therefore is the expression of the extravagance of her heroic love. The particular circumstances of her life as a cloistered nun and heroic victim of reparation does not allow easy imitation of her in the material sense of that term. But we should strive to be akin to her in her spiritual love of God and neighbor allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us even to that heroic love that seems to be the natural breath of Margaret Mary's soul.

At the canonization ceremony Pope Benedict XV stated: "The apostolate of Margaret Mary Alacoque, in general, has not yet found among the faithful the response and favor that it should have. . . It seems to us that the full glorifi-

cation of Margaret Mary has been reserved by God for such a time in which the mission entrusted to her to propagate the cult of the Sacred Heart will appear more extended and more accepted in the world, and on account richer in fruit."

Although that statement was made in 1920, it justifies the publication of this translation of a nearly antiquated French work. At this time when a smoke screen seems to have confused many in regard to Eucharistic worship, St. Margaret Mary recalls to us how vital the Sacramental Presence of Christ is in the pursuit of union with God.

Presentation of Christ, 1977

Chapter 1

The Relationship between the Devotion to the Holy Eucharist and Devotion to the Sacred Heart 'In Fact'

IN LAW and in fact there exist unquestionable relationships between devotion to the holy Eucharist and devotion to the Sacred Heart. Further on, we shall examine the theoretical and doctrinal interrelation which bring together in harmonious intimacy the worship of the Blessed Sacrament and that paid to the Sacred Heart. For now, we should like to limit ourselves to pointing out the remarkable affinities which both practically and historically link these two forms of piety so dear to Christian hearts.

We can, I think, group under the following four headings the considerations which show convincingly how close these affinities are: 1) the happenings at Paray and the theology of devotion to the Sacred Heart; 2) the definitely eucharistic circumstances surrounding the principal apparitions; 3) the memorable disclosures made to St. Margaret by Our Lord; and 4) the parallel historical development these two devotions have enjoyed since the revelations at Paray.

1. The Happenings at Paray and the Theology of Devotion to the Sacred Heart

Father Bainvel begins his remarkable book on "The devotion to the Sacred Heart" by this page which, it seems to

us, sums up very well what we should like to stress here at the start. This is what he says:

"The worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as it is recognized and practiced in the Church, is not based on the revelations made to St. Margaret Mary any more than the feast of Corpus Christi is based on the revelations granted to Blessed Juliana of Mont Cornillon. In both cases what the Church took into consideration was the devotion itself, and its spread. She pronounced her judgment on the devotion, not on the revelations. Still, the revelations had a great deal to do with the movement; Margaret Mary, like Blessed Juliana, was the providential instrument God made use of. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, as the Church received it and made it her own, is the devotion which the Saint declared she had received through a revelation from Jesus Christ, and which she was told to propagate. This is an evident fact."

"Recognizing this fact does not, of itself, imply any definite evaluation of the Saint's visions. But it does require a close study of them, since they dominate the entire history of the devotion, and since this devotion presents itself to us as a historical fact even more than as a historical truth. Margaret Mary, so to speak, lit the torch; she first lived the devotion and then passed it on to others. Spreading from one person to another, veneration of the Sacred Heart finally became a recognized form of devotion in the Catholic Church, a part of the Church's public worship, with its feast and its authorized practices. Before her, others had paid homage to the Sacred Heart and had tried to spread the practice; but the form of devotion which eventually became the public worship of the Sacred Heart is the one which had its origin in the Saint's heart."

We must, then, see this clearly and recognize it once for all: the dogmatic basis of the devotion to the Sacred Heart is independent of any private revelation. It is a consequence of the dogma of the Incarnation, a splendid flower that blossoms from this incomparably fruitful dogma, a flower which has finally come to full bloom in the Church's divine atmosphere. Its legitimacy cannot be denied, any more than the truths which serve as its firm foundation—and this without regard to Mechtilde, Gertrude, John Eudes or Margaret Mary, to mention only these. On the other hand, it is certainly true that the devotion to the Sacred Heart which the nun of Paray practiced in so living and concrete a fashion, and which, (she tells us) she had received from our Lord himself, is in every detail the same as the devotion to the Sacred Heart which the Church has officially approved. Speaking from a purely historical point of view, the Church made use of the apparitions of Paray le Monial to determine and fix with precision the doctrine concerning the Sacred Heart. We can even affirm that it was as a consequence of the revelations of our Savior to St. Margaret Mary that the theology of this devotion took shape in Catholic teaching. This is particularly true with reference to the systemizing of the pious practices in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On this point the Saint's influence is obvious. We are far from wishing to start any polemics (what good would that do?); still, we may be permitted a passing comment. Why do some people wish to oppose the influence of St. John Eudes to that of St. Margaret Mary in the establishing of devotion to the Sacred Heart?

It seems to us that Msgr. Gauthey set the matter straight very clearly in his brochure entitled "The Precursor of the

Sacred Heart." He is talking, evidently of St. John Eudes. Here are some significant passages we think worth quoting:

"There is no doubt," writes the Archbishop of Besançon, "that St. John Eudes was the first to pay worship, and to have worship paid, to the Sacred Heart of Mary and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Decree proclaiming the heroicity of his virtues, dated January 6, 1903, just before the death of Leo XIII, calls him, very correctly, the author of the liturgical cult paid to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. The Decree of Beatification (April, 1909), goes further, saying: 'he himself was devoured by a special love for the most holy hearts of Jesus and of Mary; he was the first to conceive, by divine inspiration, the idea of paying them, and of having paid to them, a true liturgical worship. We should, therefore, consider him as the *father* of this devotion; for as soon as he founded his Congregation of priests he took care to have his sons celebrate the feast of the Sacred Hearts. He should also be considered the *doctor* of this devotion, since he composed a proper Mass and Office in honor of the Sacred Hearts; finally he should be looked upon as the *apostle* of this devotion, because he spent all his efforts and spared no pains to spread everywhere the beneficent worship of the Sacred Hearts.' "

True, St. John Eudes was the first to have public worship paid to the Sacred Heart of Jesus; true, he was the father, doctor, and apostle of this devotion; but what he promoted was not yet the full worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as our Lord asked St. Margaret Mary to have it worshipped. Who can deny that the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus made real progress after the revelations received at Paray? The devotion established by St. John Eudes cor-

responded very adequately with the knowledge of the Sacred Heart of Jesus common in his day. The revelations granted to St. Margaret Mary made known to us sentiments, dispositions and attitudes in the Sacred Heart which were not explicitly known as yet: for instance the sorrow our Lord experiences, or, if, you prefer, the privation of accessory glory, which follows from the ingratitude of mankind toward the Holy Eucharist.

"It seems to us," adds Msgr. Gauthey, "that the important question is not whether Margaret Mary's mission was more striking or more effective than that of St. John Eudes, but rather whether we can determine and pinpoint the object of her mission, which differed from his. The revelations she received did more than simply 'confirm and spread a devotion that was already established.' The fact is that the revelations of Paray added to the cult propagated by St. John Eudes a new dimension, namely, the idea of reparation and of making amends to our Lord. Again, the devotion advocated by St. John Eudes was inspired primarily by the love our Lord shows us in his Incarnation and Passion; it did not leave the Holy Eucharist out of consideration, of course, but it did not directly concern itself with this. On the other hand, the worship Christ asked St. Margaret Mary to establish referred directly to the Holy Eucharist." We shall come back to this point later. To conclude, then, we might say that the title which seems to fit St. John Eudes best is that of Precursor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. That surely, is glory enough.

The worship professed and propagated by St. John Eudes was a magnificent instrument to prepare the way for the cult revealed to St. Margaret Mary. But the influence of the revelations of Paray has become preponderant in the

Church. All the pious practices which our Lord requested his faithful servant to undertake are the ones that have been universally adopted. To sum up, the great feast of the Sacred Heart is not the one which St. John Eudes celebrated on October 20th, but the one we celebrate on the Friday after the octave of the feast of Corpus Christi.

It is understood, then, that when we speak of the marvellous affinity between the Holy Eucharist and the devotion to the Sacred Heart, we are talking about the devotion to the Sacred Heart which comes to us from St. Margaret Mary.

2. The Clearly Eucharistic Circumstances Surrounding the Main Apparitions

One thing is easy to verify: the main apparitions of our Lord to St. Margaret Mary took place in circumstances which give them a definite eucharistic character. Let us look at the facts.

As we know, Jesus appeared many times to his faithful servant; but there are three visions which historians and theologians call "major" apparitions, and which constitute, so to say, the "gospel" of the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

In her letter to Father Croiset, dated November 3, 1689, the Saint indicates as the "first special grace" she received, and that had a direct connection with her mission and with the worship of the Sacred Heart, the vision she had on St. John the Evangelist's feast day, December 27th. She does not specify the year, but it was in all probability 1673. The memorial she wrote by order of Father Rolin gives us some specific details.

She mentions very particularly the place where this vision took place. "On one occasion," she says, "as I was before the Blessed Sacrament, I was suddenly filled with the divine presence so forcefully that I forgot all about myself and the place where I was, and I abandoned myself to this divine Spirit, surrendering my heart to the power of his love."

The second major apparition took place in 1674; the exact date is not known. Father Bainvel thinks this was the third major apparition, for he calls the second the one in which our Lord showed St. Margaret Mary his heart, brilliant as the sun, transparent as crystal, surrounded by the crown of thorns, surmounted by a cross, and bearing the wound inflicted by Longinus' spear. Be that as it may, the apparition of which we now speak also possesses a definitely eucharistic character, according to the Saint herself. "On one occasion, when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed," she says, "I felt myself completely drawn away from myself. . ."

The same remark must be made about the third major apparition, which can be called the triumphal apparition. It took place during the octave of Corpus Christi, according to all appearances in the year 1675, and most probably on June 16. Again the Saint herself mentions the eucharistic circumstance. "As I was praying before the Blessed Sacrament, during the octave, I received from my God the overflowing graces of his love. . ."

Over and above these three major apparitions it would be easy to mention other visions of lesser importance, in which however the same eucharistic character would be found. For instance:

On one occasion when St. Claude de la Colombiere was saying Mass in the Visitandines' chapel, our Lord be-

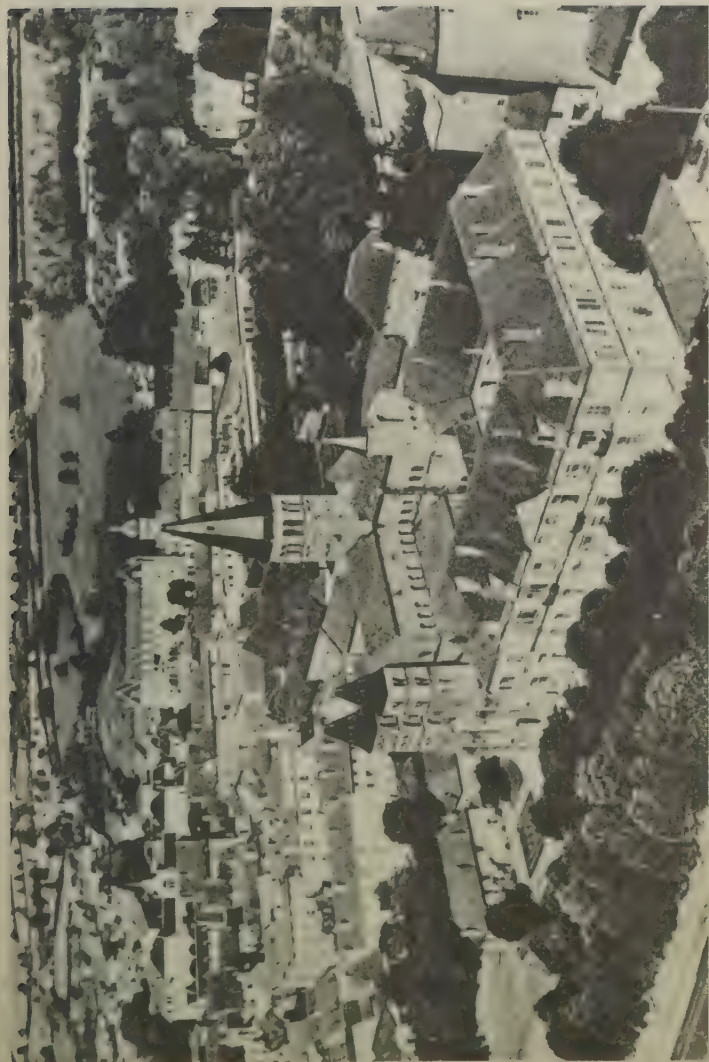
stowed great graces on him and on St. Margaret Mary. As the latter approached the holy table to receive communion, Jesus showed her his heart in the shape of a burning furnace, with two other hearts ready to plunge into it.

After having Mother Greyfié copy out her act of total donation to our Lord, Margaret Mary affixed her signature to the document next to that of her superioress. As we know, to this signature in ink on paper she later added a bloody signature on her breast. Her generosity was soon rewarded. As she was receiving communion the divine Master showed her, written in his own heart, the wonderful words: "I make you the heiress of my heart."

The holy Visitandine tells us about the occasion on which she was admitted to the company of the Seraphim. She was close to the Blessed Sacrament. "Having withdrawn to a spot near the Blessed Sacrament, while I was busy with my work, kneeling, I felt myself becoming completely recollected in body and soul. . ."

When our Lord put a crown of thorns on her head, it was just after she had received communion. "As I was going to receive communion, the sacred Host appeared to me so resplendent that I could have taken it for a sun, the brightness of which I could not endure. Our Lord was in the middle of it, holding a crown of thorns. He put it on my head, saying, 'Take this crown, my daughter, as a sign of that which will soon be given to you so that you may be made comformable to me.'"

Again, it was when she was in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament on an Ascension Day that a new grace was granted to her. "As we were going to the choir on this Ascension Day (May 30, 1680) to honor the day on which



Paray-le-Monial. Panoramic Aerial View of the Basilica

our Lord went up to Heaven, and while I was before the Blessed Sacrament, I experienced a profound quietude; immediately a brilliant light appeared, in the midst of which I saw my beloved Jesus. He drew near to me and said: 'My daughter, I have chosen your soul so that it may be for me a place of heavenly rest on this earth; your heart will be a throne of delight for my divine love.' "

As we can see, the apparitions of our Lord to the Saint usually took place in a eucharistic setting. This fact is especially noticeable in the major apparitions.

3. The Declarations Made by Our Lord to the Saint

We can group these in four categories: the statements concerning the love of the Sacred Heart; the complaints of this adorable heart; the requests he made; and finally his promises.

In all this we again find a definitely eucharistic note.

Appearing to St. Margaret Mary Jesus solemnly declares the unspeakable love of his heart, and says, "My divine heart is so passionately in love with men, and with you in particular, that not being able to contain in itself any longer the flames of its ardent charity, it must pour them out through you. . . . Behold this heart which has loved men so much, which has spared nothing, going so far as to exhaust itself and consume itself in order to show them its love. . ." Christ is thinking, no doubt, of the multiple proofs, the incomparable signs of his love that he has given us; but very obviously he is thinking as the context shows, of the Eucharist which he calls his sacrament of love. This is evident

especially in the last great apparition, for no sooner had the good Master expressed the immensity and the intensity of his love, than he complains of the ingratitude he meets with in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

In fact, most of the poignant complaints made by our Lord refer to the holy Eucharist. "And instead of thanks, all I get from most men is ingratitude, scorn, irreverence, sacrilege and coldness that they show me in this sacrament of love. What is still harder to endure is that this comes so often from hearts consecrated to me."

"I thirst, I so ardently thirst to be loved by men in the most Blessed Sacrament, that this thirst devours me; and yet I find no one who tries to slake my thirst by giving me some little return of love for love."

The Saint says, "I felt much sorrow at the thought that this bread of love was eaten unworthily, particularly after he showed me the degrading treatment he received in a certain soul, where I beheld him as though bound, gagged and trampled upon. He said to me in a sad voice, 'See how sinners mistreat and despise me!'"

"My daughter, I have come into the heart which I myself gave to you, so that by your fervor you might make up for the injuries I receive in so many tepid and cowardly hearts which dishonor me in the Blessed Sacrament."

We conclude here these quotations concerning the complaints made by the Sacred Heart. What Jesus reproached the Saint with most severely was her lack of respect and attention when she was in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, especially during the time assigned for the Office and for mental prayer.

Now let us turn to the insistent requests made by the

Sacred Heart. He is neglected and despised in the sacrament of his love. He wants to be loved by all means; he seeks some return of love; he hopes that some reparation and compensation will be made to him. And all of this has reference to the Blessed Eucharist.

What exactly does he ask for?

He wants frequent and fervent communions. "You must receive me in the Blessed Sacrament as often as obedience will permit, no matter how many mortifications and humiliations you may endure because of this; accept them all as pledges of my love."

He asks her to receive communion in reparation each First Friday of the month. "You must receive communion every First Friday of each month."

He asks for the First Friday communion on nine consecutive months, and promises great favors to those who do this.

He asks for the practice of the Holy Hour, which enables a soul to take part in what he endured during his agony in the Garden of Olives, and thus to play the role of consoling Angel in his regard. "Every Thursday night I will make you share in that deathly sadness that I willingly endured in the Garden of Olives; this sadness will turn into a sort of agony, in a manner which you will not be able to comprehend, an agony more painful to bear than death itself." But is not this agony of Gethsemane a sublime link connecting the Cenacle and Calvary, joining the institution of the divine Eucharist with the immolation of Christ's body on the cross, linking the first Mass in the Cenacle with the bloody sacrifice of Golgotha?

Jesus asks for a special feast in honor of his adorable

heart, but he wants it celebrated on the first Friday after the octave of the feast of Corpus Christi.* He wants people to receive communion on that day to make up for the insults offered him during the time he was exposed on the altars; he also wants an act of public reparation. "I ask you that the first Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi be dedicated to a special feast for honoring my heart, and for making amends to me by a solemn act of reparation. I want you to receive communion on that day to make up for the insults I received during the time I was exposed on the altar."

He asks the Saint to pay constant homage to his victim state in the Blessed Sacrament. "He gave me to understand that since he has destined me to do nothing else but render constant homage to him in his victim state in the Blessed Sacrament, I ought at all times to immolate to him my entire being through love, adoration, annihilation, conformity with the death-like life he lives in the holy Eucharist."

Finally, to encourage souls to accede to his requests, to fulfill his ardent desires, to give him the homage his heart desires, he uses promises, binds himself to grant such persons the most consoling favors. It is noticeable that among these promises a number concern the holy Eucharist.

We mentioned a moment ago the homage that our Lord desired to receive on the special feast set aside for honoring his heart. Right after speaking of this, Jesus added, "I promise that my heart will open so as to pour out in abundance the riches of its divine love on those who pay it this honor and who try to have such honor paid to it by others."

*Presently the Sacred Heart "feast" has the rank of a Solemnity and is assigned for the Friday after the Second Sunday after Pentecost.

4. The Remarkable Parallelism Between the Progress of Devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Progress of Devotion to the Holy Eucharist

Limiting ourselves to observable facts, we can affirm that development of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament went hand in hand with progress in devotion to the Sacred Heart. Of course, we need not recall that devotion to the Blessed Sacrament had flourished magnificently long before devotion to the Sacred Heart was known, and did so quite independently of the latter. Devotion to the holy Eucharist existed first, before devotion to the Sacred Heart. But in practice, and this is what we are calling attention to here, progress in the devotion to the divine heart of Jesus always furthers the worship of the Eucharist. To determine the reasons for this parallel development we need only recall what was explained previously, and especially what was said concerning the complaints and the promises made by our Lord, which St. Margaret Mary has transmitted to us. Our purpose here is not to enter into lengthy historical disquisitions, but simply to illustrate our affirmations by adducing a few examples. Let us call to mind the unfortunate Jansenist heresy. What was the outcome of the Jansenists' false and fatal claim to show such respect toward the mystery of the holy Eucharist? One of them wrote a book on "frequent communion" which sought to prove that the summit of perfection consisted in going to communion very rarely, which tried to dissuade souls from approaching the holy table, which created a void around the tabernacle, which put fear in the place of love. How unbelievable were the ravages in the Church in France

that resulted from this strange doctrine! Its pernicious consequences lasted only too long. The apparitions at Paray le Monial were the providential response, the sovereign remedy used by God to eradicate this pestilence in the spiritual life. Little by little, thanks to devotion to the Sacred Heart, people came back to the holy Eucharist which they had for so long neglected. Thanks to the confidence they felt in the divine heart of Jesus, love began to "cast out fear." The sacred Host once again drew all eyes and hearts to itself. Souls began to realize how much they needed to draw nearer to the tabernacle and to the holy table.

See what goes on today. It will enable you to judge what happened before. Establish the worship of the Sacred Heart in a parish; do your best to develop it by all the means in your power; set up Confraternities, the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart properly so called, the Confraternity of the Perpetual Adorers, the Apostolate of Prayer, and so on. One of the principal goals will be to get people to go to communion at least once a month, and to make communions of reparation. Organize Holy Hours. True, this exercise can take place anywhere; but you will see that an irresistible urge will make people want to spend this time in church before the altar, and even, if possible, before the Blessed Sacrament exposed. Stress the First Fridays of the month, and try to make them days of special fervor in your parish; to do this you will call all souls to share in the eucharistic banquet. Give to the feast of the Sacred Heart all the solemnity you can; plan a splendid liturgy. Excellent; but you would have left out the most essential element if you did not think of procuring for the hidden God of the Eucharist the homage which he particularly requested of St. Margaret Mary,

namely communion and an act of solemn reparation. This is why Paray le Monial and Montmartre in Paris are such admirable focuses of eucharistic devotion. They are, pre-eminently, the sanctuaries of the Sacred Heart.

The pilgrims who come to pray in these sanctuaries are not real pilgrims unless they take advantage of the opportunities given them to receive holy communion. As is well known, in the National Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is carried out day and night. Does not this excellent practice show the influence of the Savior's complaints and requests? We might say the same thing with regard to the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart in families, and to the practice of family consecration. The words spoken by our Lord to Zachaeus, "Today I must abide in your house," find their complete fulfillment in the act of consecration of the home to the Sacred Heart only if the members of this family approach the holy table and receive the Master into the inner sanctuary of their souls.

We have, it seems to me, made sufficiently clear the relationships existing in fact between the devotion to the Holy Eucharist and the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Whether one observes the connection between the facts of Paray and the theology of the Sacred Heart, or whether one considers the circumstances surrounding the major apparitions, whether one goes over in detail the confidences made by our Lord to St. Margaret Mary, or whether one examines, finally, the parallelism between the growth of devotion to the Sacred Heart and that of devotion to the Holy Eucharist, one cannot fail to be struck by the marvellous affinities presented by these two forms of veneration for Christ.



Paray-le-Monial. The Basilica of the Sacred Heart

5. Authoritative Opinions

We have been examining the relationships which do in fact exist between devotion to the Holy Eucharist and devotion to the Sacred Heart. No question about it, some very remarkable affinities exist here.

These similarities which draw together so closely these two great devotions of the Catholic faithful have been pointed out and stressed by some of the highest authorities in the Church.

In his reply to Cardinal Perraud, who had written telling him about the eucharistic functions which were going to be held at Paray le Monial, Leo XIII wrote as follows: "After the city of Jerusalem, no more appropriate place could have been chosen for a Eucharistic Congress than the town of Paray le Monial, which lies within your jurisdiction. It was there, in fact, that Christ, who in instituting the Holy Eucharist had, so to speak, poured out in torrents the riches of his love, caused these same riches to flow forth again from a new source, and spread them abroad in the greatest profusion when he revealed the worship of his divine heart. It was from this place that, mainly through the cooperation of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, he spread this worship throughout the entire Church.'

The Bishop of Autun reiterated this final thought of Leo XIII in the pastoral letter he sent to the clergy and faithful of his diocese announcing to them the Eucharistic Congress of 1897. After several pages containing beautiful and timely considerations, Cardinal Perraud added: "The Congress of 1893 took place in Jerusalem, in the neighborhood

of the Cenacle, not far from the praetorium, the Via Dolorosa, the hill of Calvary where our Savior completed his sacrifice and shed the very last drop of his blood after the soldier's lance had pierced his heart. Certainly, memories such as these far outrank all those that could be evoked by any other spot on earth, however venerable; and we surely would not begin to compare Paray le Monial with the Holy Places of Palestine, forever made sacred by the birth, the human life, and the death of our divine Redeemer. However, we make bold to repeat what the Holy Father said: that our Paray was providentially and gloriously predestined by God. This makes it eminently fitting that zealous propagators and champions of the worship of the Holy Eucharist should meet there."

"Jesus Christ, it is true, did not institute the Holy Eucharist in Paray, nor did he suffer his passion there. But it was there that he did reveal some of his deepest secrets, his most poignant sorrows, the most intense desires of his heart; and he took care that this revelation, so important for Catholic piety and for the renewal of fervor within the Christian people, should be indissolubly linked with the dogma and the fact of his real presence under the Eucharistic species. It was while he was exposed in the monstrance that he made known to the humble Visitandine nun, whom he had chosen as the recipient and apostle of his designs, what an additional burden of suffering, what a new Passion, more intolerable almost than the first, was imposed on him by the neglect, the ingratitude, the outrages offered him by too many of his children who correspond so badly with the greatest of his gifts. He showed Margaret Mary his open breast; he showed her his heart crowned with thorns, sur-

mounted by a cross. He gave her to understand how ardently he thirsted for reparation; and he determined in the most precise manner how and in what way this reparation should be offered to him."

It would be easy to multiply quotations of this kind on the subject; but the highly qualified testimonials we have just cited should suffice.

In concluding these reflections on the relationships which exist between devotion to the Holy Eucharist and devotion to the Sacred Heart, we should like to note these meaningful words by Abbé Suavé in the preface to his work on the Eucharist. On page 21, the well-known author of numerous 'Elevations' on Christian dogmas says this, speaking of our Lord:

"A great many souls have come to realize that they did not need to seek you in the far-away past, in the distant reaches of space. They find you in your Eucharist. So it is that the movement of devotion towards the Sacred Heart leads in the most 'natural' way (as supernatural things do) to the Holy Eucharist. These two devotions, towards the Eucharist and towards the Sacred Heart, meet, mingling their light and their fires in the Blessed Sacrament and in the holy sacrifice of the Mass."

It was our purpose to begin by showing these historical and practical affinities between devotion to the Holy Eucharist and devotion to the Sacred Heart. We shall now proceed to study the relationships between them in theory and in law.

Chapter 2

The Relationship between the Devotion to the Holy Eucharist and Devotion to the Sacred Heart 'In Law'

WE HAVE explained the evident yet mysterious affinities existing in fact between devotion to the Eucharist and devotion to the Sacred Heart. Now we need to examine the relationships which theoretically (*de jure*, as theologians say), unite these two great devotions of the Catholic Church.

Man's worship must be in harmony with his whole being. It aims at taking possession of all the constituent elements in him so as to orient them toward God. Now, our nature has a double aspect. We are made up of body and soul, matter and spirit. We know the Scholastic saying, "*Nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu.*" Our intellect is nourished by the material provided by our senses.

This is why in every devotion, spiritual authors generally distinguish a double object: first, and more visibly, a material object; then, somewhat removed from this, another, more spiritual object, at times symbolized, sometimes recalled to mind and kept before it by the same material object. Thus, for instance, in the case of relics, we honor first of all the relic itself, which is something material and visible; this leads us to honor the saint himself. At Paray le Monial

one can venerate the major relics kept there: the body of St. Margaret Mary, and the forearm of St. Blaise, Bishop of Sebaste in Armenia. The material object of our devotion is these sacred remains themselves, but as everyone realizes, the most important thing, the principal object (even if it is less immediately apparent) is the saint herself, the confidant of the Sacred Heart, or the holy Bishop, both of whom are in heavenly glory. Hence, as theologians teach, our veneration is paid not so much to the relic, but to the saint himself. Still, in practice, these two objects which our analysis has distinguished, are really one: the single object, integral and total, of our veneration.

These few principles will help us understand what follows.

In the Holy Eucharist, the material object we worship is the sacred consecrated Host which has become the body of our Lord, which truly contains the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. This is why the liturgy speaks of the "feast of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Then, beyond this apparent object, the sacred Host, there is another object, more spiritual and infinitely superior to it, i.e. the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the very Person of the Word of God.

If anyone asks why we adore this Host which has become the body of Jesus Christ, or why we should adore the body of Jesus Christ, since it is a created body like ours, the only answer we can give is that this sacred body is hypostatically united to the Person of the eternal Word.

Such is the teaching of the doctors. It suffices to mention St. Thomas. Read the ten questions in which he studies, in the *Summa Theologica*, the sacrament of the Eucharist;

re-read in recollected attention and with the insight that comes from piety, the admirable Office which he composed at the request of Pope Urban IV—that Office in which the theologian-poet has created a splendid masterpiece to the glory of the mystery of our altars. You will see how he brings out in an eloquent yet precise manner the double element, material and spiritual, of our Eucharistic worship: the Sacred Host which truly contains under the sacramental species the body of Christ; and the Word of God whose immense charity inspired the prodigious invention of this sacrament, called the sacrament of love. “*Caritatis expressimum, in finem dilexit illos.*”

Such is the Church's doctrine. Worship of the Blessed Sacrament, whether solemn or private, is a consequence of our belief that the real presence remains permanently under the sacramental appearances. It has often been noted that Protestants seem to have an unexplainable repugnance to any devotion, especially public devotion toward the Holy Eucharist. Among his many incoherent statements on this subject, Luther one day admitted: “No feast do I detest more than this feast of Corpus Christi.” For this reason, after having restated its faith by means of the Council of Trent, the Church also wanted to re-affirm its adoration. Re-read the declarations made in Chapter V, or Canon 6, which states: “If anyone says that in the Sacrament of the Eucharist Christ should not be adored, as the only Son of God, by a worship of *latria*, and this even exteriorly; and consequently if anyone says that he should not be honored by a particular solemnity, or be carried in procession according to the rite and praiseworthy custom which is universal in the Church; or he should not be publicly exposed for the adora-

tion of multitudes; or that those who adore him are idolaters, let him be anathema."

As we can easily see, the Council first defines that Christ in the Eucharist deserves the worship of latria; the reason for this is simply that he is the only Son of God, and God in his own right. It follows that the Eucharist can be adored, since the only reality it contains is the Person of Jesus Christ. This is precisely what the Council declares in Chapter V: The Catholic Church has always paid to this holy sacrament "the worship of latria which belongs only to the true God." No matter, it adds, that the main purpose of the real presence is holy communion. We can and must adore Christ wherever he is present.

Next, the Council enumerates some of the most solemn forms of eucharistic worship, and it affirms their legitimacy. They are: the feast of Corpus Christi, processions of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Not only, says the document, are these forms of worship legitimate; they are also very praiseworthy manifestations of piety, "*pie et religiose admodum*." In addition, they are most opportune: "for it is right that there should be certain feast days on which all Christians may manifest in a more solemn manner their gratitude to the Lord and Redeemer of all, for such a divine and altogether ineffable Gift."

Thus, in the Council's declarations we find clearly indicated the elements that go to make up devotion to the Holy Eucharist.

Let us now go on to consider the devotion to the Sacred Heart. What is the object of this devotion?

We might define devotion to the Sacred Heart as follows: devotion to the human heart of our Savior, as the

symbol of his love. In this way we indicate the double object which makes up this devotion; its material or sensible object; and its spiritual object.

Of course, the worship of the Sacred Heart, like all worship, is addressed to the Person of our Lord. St. Thomas remarks, in fact, that "strictly speaking, worship concerns the person." *Proprie honor exhibetur toti rei subsistenti. Honor adorationis proprie debetur hypostasi.*" Here we have the general and necessary character of all devotions; and in this sense Muzarelli said that the person of our Lord is "the precise immediate and direct material object" which we adore under the name of "the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

"But," says Suavé, and we agree with him, "in the person of our Lord the special object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart is, first, the physical heart of Christ, united to the Word, and hence worthy of our adoration just as his body and his soul are. His heart symbolizes his charity. Second, under this adorable symbol we honor the finite and the infinite charity of our Lord. The physical heart is a symbol; love is what it symbolizes; there we have the special object of the feast and of the worship of the Sacred Heart. In the foreground we have the physical heart, the symbolic heart; the charity of Christ is less apparent at first glance, but it is obviously the more important element."

The same author sums up the teaching which seems to be commonly accepted today when he adds: "What the Sacred Heart symbolizes, according to the most authentic documents and to the opinions of the most qualified theologians is, first, the finite charity of Christ, i.e. the charity of our Lord's sacred humanity shown especially in his Passion and in the Holy Eucharist. Second, it implies, in a more

indirect manner, but really and truly just the same, the infinite charity of Christ, i.e. the charity of his divinity; and we adore this charity especially insofar as it is planned, or prepared, or brought about, or applied to the mysteries of the Passion and of the Eucharist."

"True, the infinite charity of the Son of God is shared by the three Divine Persons, since it is an attribute of the divine nature; still, this does not mean that it does not belong truly to the Son; and this is what the Church honors in the Son in a very special manner by the worship of the Sacred Heart."

This quick survey of the object of devotion to the Holy Eucharist and the object of devotion to the Sacred Heart permits us to set up a comparison between these two forms of worship; this will enable us to distinguish better both the points in which they are alike and those in which they differ.

The worship of the Blessed Sacrament addresses itself to the sacred body of our Savior which is really, truly and substantially present under the eucharistic species; to his sacred body whole and entire, to his entire sacred humanity, to his sacred flesh and blood, his soul and his divinity.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart does not address itself directly to Jesus' entire sacred humanity, to his whole body. Instead, it singles out in his adorable body a most important organ, one of the most noble parts of a human being, the heart. Furthermore, the heart which we consider as the object of our devotion to the Sacred Heart is not the heart insofar as it is merely a part of the body of Christ in his sacramental state; rather, it is the heart of Jesus in its natural state, as it beat in his bosom from the first instant of the Incarnation, in the Cenacle, in Gethsemane, on the cross. The thing

is obvious enough. From the theoretical point of view, our Lord might have not conceived or brought about the prodigy of the Eucharist. How much sadder the valley of tears would have been in that case! Still, the hypothesis is possible. Now, the non-existence of the Eucharist would not have prevented the existence of the worship of the Sacred Heart, since in this devotion we are addressing ourselves to the heart of Jesus in its natural state.

On the other hand, we might offer the following considerations.

In the worship of the Blessed Sacrament we dwell on the incomparable proof of love that Jesus gave us when he invented and instituted this marvellous means of remaining with us to the end of time. In the devotion to the Sacred Heart, what the Church wishes to propose for our grateful attention is not only this sign of Christ's love, but also all the other marks of love, without exception, that Jesus has given us. By the devotion to the Sacred Heart, as theologians commonly teach, we take pleasure in contemplating all the charity of Christ our Savior, not only that which appears in his Passion and in the Holy Eucharist, but his finite and his infinite charity, his created and his uncreated love.

Now, since such close theoretical, historical and practical bonds link the worship of the Sacred Heart and that of the Holy Eucharist it is not surprising if the revelations made at Paray le Monial by our Lord to St. Margaret Mary should have had such a powerful influence on the development of eucharistic piety. It is impossible to promote devotion to the Sacred Heart without at the same time and by the very fact promoting devotion to the august sacrament of the altar.

Chapter 3

Devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus

BEFORE getting into the specific object of this study of St. Margaret Mary, in which we hope to show how she lived with the Eucharist, by the Eucharist, and for the Eucharist, we should like to finish the preliminary questions concerning the practical, theoretical, historical and doctrinal relationships between devotion to the Holy Eucharist and devotion to the Sacred Heart. We should like to present here a few observations on devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

It is not at all my intention to reopen a discussion of this matter, which in the past, led to rather heated polemics. But since the opportunity presents itself, I merely wish, for my own personal satisfaction and in the best interests of my readers, to set forth some aspects of the question as it stands today. In my humble opinion, even after so much ink has been spilled on this subject, certain of its aspects remain insufficiently clear. To arrive at a solidly-based opinion I reread all the documents from Rome: Rescripts, Decrees . . . relating to devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. I went over the reports presented at various Eucharistic Congresses, in particular the ones given by Father Lemmius at Madrid, Father



Paray-le-Monial. Courtyard of the Blessed Sacrament where the Heart of Jesus Appeared Surrounded by the Seraphim

Tesnières at Lourdes, Father Legrand at Angers, Father Masquillier at Rome. Finally, I have studied various articles, especially the ones which seemed to give the best explanation of the matter, published in the *Bulletin of the Priest-Apostles of the Sacred Heart* (Montmartre: 1912-13).

To proceed with proper order, we should, I believe, examine the matter in its historical, theoretical and practical aspects.

Here, to begin with, are some facts concerning the origin and the history of this devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

Towards the middle of the 19th century, in 1854 to be exact, a prayer to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus was published with the approval of Msgr. de la Bouillerie, and began to spread among pious souls this new name given to the Sacred Heart—after so many other titles coined to praise its perfections, declare its deeds, and implore its mercy. This prayer had been written by a saintly woman who later founded an Order of nuns dedicated to consoling the Sacred Heart for the outrages offered him, and the neglect he endures in the sacrament of his love. It was intended as a means of drawing attention to, and of eliciting acts of reparation, gratitude and prayer from her daughters and directed toward the Blessed Sacrament where this loving Heart of our Savior dwells, loves, and gives itself, but where it is also misjudged and betrayed day after day. This holy person had felt inspired to join the word “eucharistic” to the name of the Sacred Heart. Other formulas containing the invocation to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus followed, and several Bishops granted indulgences to those who used them: for instance Cardinal Pie, the illustrious Bishop of Poitiers. In 1868

Pius IX granted an indulgence of 100 days (we find it in the *Raccolta* of the time), to whoever made use of this act of expressive praise: "Praised, adored and thanked at every moment be the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus in all the tabernacles of the world, until the end of ages!"

Cardinal Guibert had approved in 1879 a secular Confraternity of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, that had been founded at Paris in connection with the religious Congregation consecrated to the worship of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. At the request of Cardinals Guibert, Desprès and Lavigerie, Pope Leo XIII, by a Brief dated Dec. 23, 1879, granted various indulgences to the Confraternity. Since then, the same Sovereign Pontiff frequently showed his benevolence towards this pious association; on Nov. 26, 1899, he raised it to the rank of an Archconfraternity, and attached more indulgences to the prayers to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

In all we find five Briefs and six Rescripts, by which Leo XIII reiterated his constant good will towards this work; on Jan. 6, 1899 he issued a Brief in response to a request by the Superior of this organization in Paris, who had asked for an indulgence of 200 days for all the faithful who recited certain prayers in honor of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. On this occasion the Pope used these weighty words: "Nothing can be more important for Us, nothing can be more agreeable, than to see the piety of Christian people toward the Sacred Heart of Jesus and toward the Blessed Sacrament of his love take on new increase day by day."

To this encouragement and approbation by the Sovereign Pontiff the voices of the Hierarchy did not fail to join. From Paris where it had started, from where it had been

confirmed, this devotion spread throughout the world. In the "Golden Book" one can find the names of 79 French Bishops, and the names of 46 others from various countries, who approved this devotion, accepted it, and recommended it in their dioceses.

Finally, in 1903, by a Brief dated Feb. 13, Leo XIII erected in his favorite church, St. Joachim's, the worldwide Archconfraternity of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

So much for the historical details; let us now turn to the theoretical or theological aspects of the question, since it is from this angle that polemics have arisen, and contradictory opinions have been expressed. Rome has finally called for a treaty of peace between the warring scribes. Devotion to the Eucharistic Heart is allowed by the Church; the Confraternities have been approved. Perhaps it will be useful to specify in what sense this is so.

To clarify the matter, perhaps we should begin by calling to mind a few theological principles.

As regards the Person of our Lord, we need to distinguish two modes of existence, two states of being: the one is his 'natural' or ordinary existence; the other is his extraordinary, sacramental existence. We here use the word 'natural' as opposed to 'sacramental.'

In what we call his 'natural' state, Jesus existed throughout his mortal life, and will exist forever in his glorious immortality. This natural existence of our Savior began at the Incarnation, continued till the institution of the Holy Eucharist and his death on the cross; it continued from the moment of his death till the moment of his resurrection. His natural existence extends also from the moment of his resurrection to the time of his ascension and triumphal entry into

Heaven; and since then the natural and ordinary state of Jesus is that which he enjoys "seated at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father, who, with him and the Holy Spirit is one and the same God."

Regarding the second manner of Christ's existence, in the sacramental state, in the Holy Eucharist, this began only in the Cenacle at the Last Supper; it will last till the end of the world.

It follows that the physical body of Jesus also has two modes of existence, one natural and the other sacramental. We have the Master's Sacred Heart, as it beat in his bosom in the crib, at Nazareth, during his public life, in the Cenacle, in the Garden of Olives, on Calvary; and we also have the Sacred Heart of Jesus as present in the Eucharist under the sacramental species.

This being so, one may ask which of these two hearts of our Lord (as distinguished above, because evidently there is only one heart of Christ), is the object of the devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

We think the answer is, "the physical heart of Jesus considered in its natural, ordinary condition."

The expression: "Eucharistic Heart of Jesus," says Father Vermeersch, S.J. "means 'the heart of Jesus to whom we owe the Eucharist'; or again 'the heart of Jesus present in the Eucharist.' Both these meanings have been adopted by those who practice this devotion. . . . We must admit our own preference is for the former understanding of the expression."

This way of looking at the matter seems to be by far the more conformable to the true interpretation of the docu-

ments issued by Rome, especially of the various replies given by the Holy Office.

In the Brief of Feb. 16, 1903, by which Leo XIII erected the Archconfraternity of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus in St. Joachim's, we read these significant words: "We desire nothing more ardently, and nothing is more agreeable to Us than to give in this august city, the center of the Catholic world, a worthy center to this Association of the faithful who, professing toward the Sacred Heart a devotion no different from that adopted by the Church, strive to pay a worship of love, gratitude, veneration and homage *to this act of supreme love* by which our divine Redeemer, pouring out all the wealth of his heart's love, instituted the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist, so that he might remain with us till the end of time."

From these words, and from the explanations furnished by the Holy Office, it is clear that the worship of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus is not more perfect than that of the Sacred Heart; that the devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus is simply devotion to the Sacred Heart considered from a special point of view; that the spiritual object of this devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus is only one aspect of the spiritual object of the worship to the Sacred Heart. The holy Eucharist is the GIFT of the entire adorable Person of the man-God; the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus is the GIVER, the source from which the Blessed Sacrament sprang, that summary of all divine marvels. Hence, the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus is simply the Sacred Heart considered as the creator of the Eucharist, the heart of Jesus in its natural state, which beat in our Lord's bosom at the solemn hour of the institution of the Sacrament of love.

With the author of the thorough study which appeared in the *Bulletin of the Priest-Apostles* of Montmartre, we can say: "Considering the Eucharist in its relationships with the Sacred Heart we can use the name 'Eucharistic Heart of Jesus,' because from or by the Eucharist (which is not the same as the Sacred Heart but an effect of, a gift from the Sacred Heart), we can rise to the Sacred Heart which, without being the Eucharist, is its cause and its giver."

We leave aside a number of other explanations which might be interesting, but which would require more lengthy developments than we propose to undertake. We must conclude, so as to go on to the practical side of the question.

Everything we stated previously in our various articles, concerning the various affinities that exist in fact between devotion to the Holy Eucharist and devotion to the Sacred Heart, shows that this devotion to the Sacred Heart such as our Lord revealed it to St. Margaret Mary, has a definitely eucharistic character. Consequently, it would seem that the souls who imitate St. Margaret Mary in all simplicity, and take their cue from her attitude toward the divine sacrament of love, do not need the help of a special devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. The worship of the Sacred Heart according to the traditions of Paray, leads straight to the worship of the Host.

But the devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus does exist, and has been approved by the Church in the sense we explained above. So long as it is properly understood it cannot fail to nourish the piety of the faithful toward the august mystery of the altar.

The Holy Office has proscribed certain emblems, images, titles and liturgical feasts which might lead to misconceptions

and prove to be a threat to the faith of simple people. Furthermore, it seems to us that certain pious authors misuse the title of Eucharistic Heart of Jesus when what they habitually mean is our Lord himself. If the Sacred Heart is Jesus whole and entire, this is not precisely the case with the title 'Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.'

Having said all this, we cannot fail to be touched and consoled when we think that in the Eucharist we have the august Person of our divine Master, Jesus himself, whole and entire.

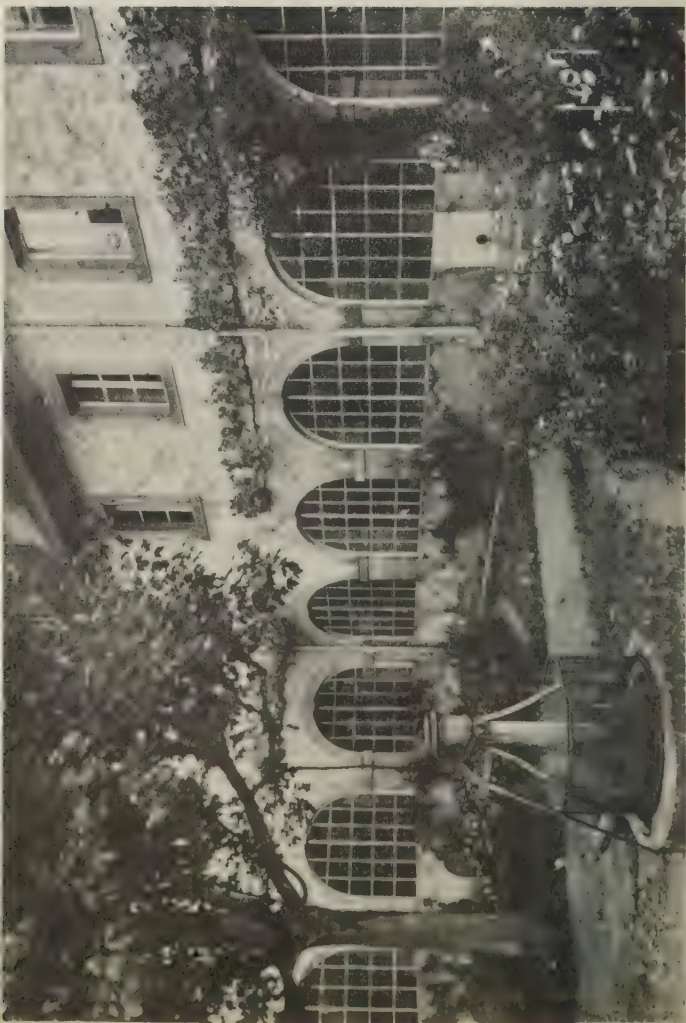
Yes, in the Eucharist Jesus is really present before us, whereas in his natural and ordinary mode of existence outside of the Eucharist, (which is the mode of existence of the Sacred Heart), Jesus is not present to us; to find him we must go back to the Savior during his mortal life, before his Ascension, or in Heaven for eternity. No doubt, the Jesus who is present in his sacramental state is not *formally* the same Jesus in his natural state; but he is *identically* the same. This distinction is worth making. Whatever is said of Christ's body or of his sacred Humanity, can be said of his heart. It is not formally the same heart, but it is identically the same.

Thanks to the gift of the Eucharist now before us, the heart of Jesus appears to us all the more amiable and worthy of love. Further, the worship of the Holy Eucharist also profits by this, since we ought to love it all the more as a gift of the ineffable love of the Sacred Heart.

"Thus, the worship of the Sacred Heart," writes abbé Suavé, "by giving us the ultimate reason for these two centrally important deeds of God: the Passion and the Holy Eucharist, throws new light on all God's works. Everything in the created world goes to the sacrifice of God, and every-

thing derives therefrom, through the Eucharist. There is no more beautiful devotion: none, I dare say, more idealistic, because it shows us the supreme reason for everything. At the same time it is the most substantial worship, because it offers us not a relic which one might keep with veneration, like the heart of a Saint, but the living heart of Jesus which is truly present along with his body, his soul with all its wealth of love and virtues, and even his divinity with all its infinite perfections, all bent on showing love for us."

"Adore the images of our Lord, and in particular those of his Sacred Heart; but beyond the image, adore the real presence of his heart, and of his charity in the Holy Eucharist."



Paray-le-Monial. The Well of the Monastery where Margaret Injured Her Head

Chapter 4

How Margaret Mary Lived with the Holy Eucharist

AS AN INTRODUCTION to this study of St. Margaret Mary we have explained various questions concerning the relationships between devotion to the Holy Eucharist and devotion to the Sacred Heart. We are anxious to take up the topic we find so absorbing: the worship paid by the Saint to the Blessed Sacrament. The history of the Church shows us the beautiful spectacle of so many souls captivated by the sweet mystery of the tabernacle. Among these eucharistic souls, the humble Visitandine of Paray seems to us to occupy a special place. Instructed by the light of a very vivid faith, she drew all the logical and practical conclusions that flow from the dogma of the real presence. She was, literally, in love with the Victim of love. One might say that her whole life was a perpetual act of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, a perpetual visit to the Blessed Sacrament, an uninterrupted Mass, and a continual communion. It is easy enough to convince oneself of this. To proceed with order in the considerations we wish to propose, we have grouped them under three headings: Margaret Mary lived with the Eucharist, by the Eucharist, and for the Eucharist.

Visiting the Blessed Sacrament as often as possible, keeping herself in deepest recollection when in the presence

of the Blessed Sacrament, thinking often of the Blessed Sacrament, attending Mass with the most admirable sentiments of union with the divine Victim, such were the means by which our Saint lived with Jesus hidden under the veils of the Sacrament.

Making spiritual communions as often as she could, and in spite of all difficulties, making them habitually, striving at all times to imitate the virtues exemplified by our Lord in the mystery of the altar, such were the ways in which the fortunate confidant of the Sacred Heart showed that she lived by the Holy Eucharist.

Giving back love for love to the God who carried his love for us to its extreme limits by remaining among us veiled under the appearances of bread and wine striving to draw souls to Jesus in the Host; offering him reparation to compensate for the disrespect and the ingratitude of men; such was the apostolate practiced by her who wished she had a thousand hearts in order to give them all to her loving Savior. This is how she lived for the Holy Eucharist.

Certainly, we cannot do better than to let St. Margaret Mary speak for herself. We shall, therefore, always begin by hearing her express herself on each of the points just enumerated; we shall leave out all personal considerations of our own. Only after we have quoted the passages referring to the topic under consideration will we seek to discern the practical lessons we can learn from her.

1. Her Visits to the Blessed Sacrament

The Saint's own words

(Speaking of herself in the 3rd person). "When she was only four years old, and being in the country with her

godmother, she felt so powerfully drawn toward the church that, far from being bored there she found no pleasure in life equal to what she experienced when she could spend a long time there; and she left it only with regret. Since, fortunately for her, the house where she was staying was very near the church, she often left the house to go to church; there she would remain kneeling, with hands joined, even though she had learned only the very first elements of Christian doctrine, which are taught to small children when they begin to talk.

"She believed that God was present in church more especially than elsewhere, because they had taught her, according to her limited understanding, that Jesus Christ, God and man, was present body and soul in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. She believed this truth in all simplicity, and delighted to be in the presence of the One who, even at that early age, had taken possession of her innocent heart."

"She could not be satisfied with remaining in the back of the church; and even though timid, she used to draw as near as she could to the altar. She envied the happiness of those who went to communion often, and were able to spend time in church; she tried to please the people on whom she depended so that they would permit her to spend a few extra moments in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament."

"At this time I turned all my affections, so that I might find all my joy and consolation, to the Sacrament of the altar. But as I then lived in a country house far from the nearest church, I could not go there without the permission of these same people; and it happened that when one was agreeable to my going the other was not. When my tears showed the disappointment I felt over this, I was accused of having given a rendezvous with someone, and that I was

trying to cover it up by pretending to go to Mass or to Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. It was certainly a most unjust judgment of me; for I felt in my heart such a horror of all things that I would have preferred to see my body torn into a thousand pieces before I would have entertained even the thought of such conduct."

"All (this person's) comfort was to remain in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. She stayed there during all her free moments, saying that our Lord constrained her so vehemently to go to him that when she tried to resist this impulse, he reduced her to a condition that she could hardly express, such sorrow did she feel; this anguish did not affect her any less when she wanted to remain in choir, and obedience called her elsewhere."

"People told her to restrain her ardor, pointing out that she should not be more devout than the rest, nor be so assiduous on feast days, spending practically all day in mental prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. So she resolved to remain in her room; but she could not do so. After holding out for a while, she felt constrained to leave her room and go to him who was calling her."

"And while she was on her way, he said to her in an irritated tone of voice—these are his exact words—'Learn that if you keep away from my presence, I will make you suffer for it; and I will do the same to those who force you to act thus. I will hide myself from them, and when they seek me they will not find me.'"

"The inclination she felt for the holy exercise of mental prayer caused her to spend almost the whole time on feast days before the Blessed Sacrament, only leaving to attend the community exercises with the other Sisters. She used to

offer the homage of her love and her interior and exterior respect to the real presence of the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ. Day and night she would have wished to remain before him in profound humility. She was deeply affected by the thought of the neglect and disrespect shown to this God of love, and remained motionless in his presence."

"Remember to recommend me to God during my retreat; and visit the Blessed Sacrament every day for me."

"When the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, the servant of God left the choir only to go where obedience called her; she displayed a respect and modesty which inspired others with devotion; on Sundays and feasts if anyone needed her, the only place to find her was in the choir."

"She advised people to spend as much time as they could before the Blessed Sacrament, to offer reparation for all the indignities and outrages which are committed in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. She urged people to visit the Blessed Sacrament five times (on days when it was exposed) in order to adore it; she recommended that they take advantage of all the time they could spare in order to pay their respects to this King of love."

"When I awake it seems to me that God is present; my heart unites itself to him as to its creator and its only fullness. This is what gives me such an ardent longing to go before the Blessed Sacrament that the time I take to dress seems to last for hours. I feel such a sharp and pressing pain that I find myself as if impeded and bound so tightly that I can't resist. I go off like an ailing person to present myself to my all-powerful Physician, outside of whom I can find neither rest nor remedy."

"I stay at his feet like a living victim whose only desire

is to be immolated and sacrificed for him, so that I may be consumed like a holocaust in the pure flames of his love, where I feel my heart being swallowed up as though in a burning furnace."

"I was fortunate enough to spend the entire day of the Visitation before the Blessed Sacrament. My Lord was pleased to strengthen his miserable servant by giving her several graces from his most loving heart."

"I received your request; and when I presented it before the Blessed Sacrament this is what came to my mind to tell you: 'Keep love, self-forgetfulness and humility in your heart, and simplicity in your mind, so that you may be able to enter upon this loving simplicity which, unless I am mistaken, he wants from us.'"

"I have just received your letter; . . . in the presence of my adorable Savior in the Blessed Sacrament I read it with much consolation, both because your desires have been granted, and because of the great graces and mercies which the divine Savior showers upon your soul in such abundance."

"Please pray for me too in a special manner before the adorable Sacrament; ask him to give me his holy love."

Reflections

By the passages we have quoted we can see what a mysterious attraction, what a celestial fascination the tabernacle exerted on Margaret Mary. She believes that Jesus is truly present in the Holy Eucharist, that he is "more present" there than elsewhere; that he remains there out of love for us, wants to place himself at our service, and to share in some

sort our daily life. Her faith knows not the slightest cloud of questioning. No doubts seem ever to tarnish it. From her earliest childhood she has been instructed to the best of her capacity in this great Catholic truth. But how intense, how admirably firm does this faith not become when the Savior himself, solemnly and repeatedly reveals to her the ineffable prodigy of his sacrament of love.

Hence, all through her life, the Eucharist is the center around which her loving and grateful heart gravitates.

An invincible attraction draws her to church, to the foot of the altar, to the heavenly Guest residing in the tabernacle. There she would wish to take up a permanent abode, remaining there day and night. Never does she experience a moment's boredom. If she happens to be living near a church she rejoices, because a few steps will bring her to him who possesses her heart. If she lives far from the church—as was the case in her natal Verosvres—distance and difficulty only serve to increase the ardor of her desires. She must ask permission to leave the house, and others object; they attribute evil intentions to her, and reprimand her severely. What does it all matter? If she has a few free moments, off she goes in haste to the church. Nothing makes her happier. Her love seems to lend her wings. If she meets with a refusal, on the contrary, she feels unspeakable sadness, a deep anguish betrays itself in tears. From the depths of her soul she cries out in sorrow to her adorable Master. In the convent at Paray, she spends all her free moments, her free days, at the foot of the altar. If anyone is looking for Sister Alacoque, and if she is not in her cell or with the community, one can be sure to find her before the Blessed Sacrament. Each morning on awakening she is seized by the thought of Jesus

in the host; the time she takes to dress seems interminable to her, so much in a hurry is she to go down to the choir for mental prayer before the tabernacle. She particularly enjoys being before the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar. Outside of communion itself nothing arouses in her such vivid moments of piety. She was in adoration before the Victim of love when she was granted all the great apparitions of the Sacred Heart.

What does Margaret Mary do when she is in the presence of her sovereign Lord and Master?

It seems that the eucharistic veils are rent asunder, and that the saintly Visitandine contemplates her Savior even as Mary Magdalen beheld him in the house at Bethany. She draws as close as she can to the altar. There she kneels, head erect, hands joined, body motionless, eyes riveted on the host or on the tabernacle door. She looks at Jesus, speaks to him, calls on him; she also keeps silent and listens to him. Her prayer is absorption in the divine. She tells her divine Master that she wants to be "a living victim"; she envies the candle on the altar which is consumed as it burns, shedding light and giving off the mystical perfume of wax; she would like to be like the sanctuary lamp which remains day and night in the company of the Blessed Sacrament; she presents herself to her Savior as to her all-compassionate, all-powerful Physician; then, as she beautifully says, she comes to pay her due homage to the divine king of her heart.

She adores him, thanks him, shares his sorrows and loneliness. She tries to make up for sin; she apologizes to him; she begs graces for herself and for others. What holy familiarity with Jesus hidden in the host! In his presence she sometimes reads the letters she has received, and tells

him about them, for there is no secret he does not share. In all simplicity and confidence she pours out her heart into his. She recommends to him all the intentions that have been recommended to her prayers. Eager to visit the Blessed Sacrament and to remain in its presence as long as possible, she advises others to do the same. She asks for their prayers, but hopes that they will be offered at the foot of the tabernacle. Can one find a soul more in love with the Eucharist? Margaret Mary had understood the incomparable privilege of the real presence; she was merely drawing the practical conclusions from her faith. What an eloquent lesson for us!

Now and then we feel sorry that we were not Jesus' contemporaries; we envy the humble shepherds of Bethlehem, the Magi from the East, the patriarch Simeon, the Apostles, the beloved disciple, Zaccheus, the family of Bethany, all those who saw, heard and spoke to our Savior, who witnessed his miracles; and we forget that we possess that same divine Master truly present among us; that he is really and substantially there, in the mystery of his Eucharist. Indeed, Jesus has pitched his tent everywhere on earth; he is in all the tabernacles of the world; and it was out of love for us that he made himself, day and night, our Guest in the Blessed Sacrament. Should men not stand guard in his presence, and consider it an honor? Alas, as a general rule, and in most churches, what solitude reigns around the tabernacle! Jesus in the Host lives in an isolation which wounds his heart. His heart seems to cry out: "The Master is here, and calls you!"

Leaving aside the religious, men and women, the priests and the truly devout who frequently visit our Lord, and who are especially faithful to their evening visit to the Blessed

Sacrament, where are the Christians who even think of coming to "pay him homage" in his tabernacle? What unconcern! What negligence! What lack of faith!

We at least, who want to be the friends of the Sacred Heart, who ought to understand the mysteries of our faith, should learn from the saints, and especially from St. Margaret Mary. More and more, let us try to become eucharistic souls. Let us make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and let this visit not be for us a period of boredom or distraction, but rather a time of tender confidences and outpourings of the heart. O my Savior, you are here before me; you know me; you love me; you wait for me. You are good, rich in everything that I lack. You want only one thing: to fill me with your blessings. Let me tell you about my joys, so that you can make them holy; let me tell you about my sorrows, my trials, my disappointments, so that you can console me. I will tell you about my plans, so that they may tend to your glory; I will speak to you about myself, about others, about those I love, about those who don't love you; about my country, about your Church; I will try to get my poor heart beating in unison with yours.

Outside of the time of these meetings with Jesus, we shall take pleasure in visiting Jesus when he is solemnly exposed in his sacrament of love. Then we shall prolong our visits as much as we can; we shall bring to our adoration all the fervor we are capable of mustering.

More than this. What true love desires is to enjoy as often as possible the presence of those we love, to take advantage of every circumstance which permits us to see, to meet, to greet them and to exchange a word with them. Let this be our way of acting. If we have a chance to enter a

church more often during the day, let us seize these precious opportunities. Greet Jesus in the tabernacle! Tell him "thanks"; offer him a word of friendship, a call for help to his heart that loves us so much. Thus we will walk in the path traced out for us by St. Margaret Mary, and her wonderful example will become the rule of our life.

Let us ask her to obtain for us the grace to know how to pay homage to our divine King in the tabernacle, as she did.

2. Her Respect for the Blessed Sacrament

Direct passages

"Our Lord reproached her most severely with lack of respect and attention in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, especially during the Office or mental prayer, lack of uprightness and purity of intention, and vain curiosity."

"The attraction that she felt for the holy exercise of mental prayer caused her to spend nearly the entire time on feast days before the Blessed Sacrament. She left only in order to attend other community exercises. There, she paid homage, by her love and her interior and exterior respect, to the real presence of the humanity of Jesus Christ. . . . She was almost never seen except kneeling, with hands joined; this we admired all the more since we knew of the constant pain she experienced, which made her weak. On one occasion, when she was just getting over a long illness, from which she had not fully recovered, she went to the Superior-ess and begged her, as a great favor, to be allowed to spend Holy Thursday night before the Blessed Sacrament,



Paray-le-Monial. Chapel of the Apparitions Restored in 1965

Mural Is by Luc Barbier; High Altar Is the Work of Edgar Delvaux, Sculptor

even though it scarcely seemed possible that she could do it. To satisfy her to some extent, the Superioress allowed her to go down to the choir at 7:30 that night, and to remain there until after the procession in the city. She accepted this first offer with great humility, but it did not satisfy her; and she begged permission to prolong the time, saying that she would spend the first half of her prayer time for herself, and the other half for her good friends—this was how she called the souls in Purgatory—so finally her Superioress allowed her to spend the night before the Blessed Sacrament, to satisfy her devotion and to help the holy souls.”

“At 7:30 she took her place in the choir, and remained there kneeling, with hands joined, erect, motionless as a statue, until the hour of Prime next morning, at which time she joined the community in singing the Office. Many Sisters assert that they saw this happen; and that this was not the only time they saw her do such things; some of them remained behind to see whether she would keep on praying all night.”

In the great apparition of 1675 our Lord told her: “Behold this heart which loved men so much that it spared nothing, exhausting and consuming itself to show them its love. And in return, all I receive from most of them is ingratitude, scorn, and irreverence in my sacrament of love. What I find even harder to bear is that this comes from hearts which are consecrated to me.” Then Jesus asked for solemn reparation “to make up for the indignities offered to him while he was exposed on the altar.”

“I remain at his feet (before the Blessed Sacrament) like a living victim which desires only to be immolated and sacrificed to him, so that I may be consumed like a holocaust in

the pure flames of his love, where I feel my heart being swallowed up as though in a burning furnace. It seems to me that my understanding withdraws itself from me and loses itself in the immense greatness of God; it is not in my power to apply my mind to the subject of my mental prayer; it contents itself with this unique object. My understanding remains in such complete blindness that it has no knowledge at all, except what this divine sun of justice sheds on it from time to time. I have no other impression, no other movement of soul except to love him; I sometimes feel myself so overwhelmed by this that I would like to sacrifice my life a thousand times to show him my desire to love him."

"I often used to ask our Lord not to let my heart be distracted from his presence. One day, as I was making a genuflection, he said to me, 'Are you going to leave your heart here? It will not leave here any more; for I will fill it with a precious perfume which will maintain in it unceasingly the fire of my love.'"

"Your good will must be the wick which must never go out. Everything which you may do and suffer, through my grace, put it into my heart, so that it may be transformed into this perfume which will be like the oil in this lamp; thus everything in it will be consumed in the fire of divine love."

"Jesus Christ, my Lord and my God, whom I believe to be truly and really present in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar, accept this act of profound adoration to fulfill the desire which I should like to have, of adoring you here unceasingly, and of thanking you for the sentiments of love which your Sacred Heart has for me. I cannot thank you for this any better than by offering you all the acts of adoration, of resignation, of patience and of love which this same Sacred

Heart made during your mortal life, which it still makes, and will make eternally in Heaven, so that I may love you, praise and adore you worthily by means of it, as far as I am able. I unite myself to this divine offering which you made of yourself to your divine Father; and I consecrate to you my whole being, beseeching you to destroy sin in me, and not to allow me to be separated from you eternally."

Reflections

Speaking of visits to the Blessed Sacrament, we tried to bring out the powerful, irresistible attraction exercised on St. Margaret Mary by the host in the tabernacle. We have also pointed out the admirable sentiments of piety and fervor which filled her whenever she was in the presence of the God of the Eucharist. It is worth stressing the incomparable lessons of external and internal respect that she has left us. Margaret Mary teaches us in a persuasive manner how we should behave when before the Blessed Sacrament. Her visible attitude is merely the reflection of her inner dispositions. On this point the texts we have quoted possess a moving eloquence.

What a heavenly vision it must have been to see the humble Visitandine of Paray in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, or solemnly exposed on the altar. One might have taken her for an angel descended on earth.

Her faith taught her the greatness, the majesty, the almighty power, the infinite perfection of him who lies hidden beneath the appearances of a bit of bread. Under this frail

and mystic disguise she beheld the Creator of the universe, the divine Mediator, the Redeemer of mankind, the Beloved Son of the Most High, the King of Kings, the God-man, our Lord Jesus whose heart is full of love for poor humanity. Is his heart not worthy of all homage and adoration? What was the temple of Jerusalem with all its wealth and sumptuous decorations compared with the humblest village chapel where a consecrated host is preserved? Should not the Catholic Church, through the magnificence of her liturgy, through the harmonious and precise unfolding of her ceremonies and solemn offices which take place around the altar beneath the vault of her marvelous cathedrals be a great school of respect toward the Blessed Sacrament?

Indeed, Margaret Mary is familiar with all the practical requirements of her faith. See her at prayer. Kneeling at the foot of the altar she remains "in profound humility; her eyes are fixed on the tabernacle or modestly cast down; her hands are joined on her breast; her body is erect"; she remains motionless; she never leans on anything to rest despite the weakness caused by her frail health; she seems as still as a marble statue; and she remains thus for hours at a time, nay the entire night from Holy Thursday to Good Friday. She offers an unforgettable sight to the Sisters who behold her with admiration. Her faith prescribed this religious attitude toward the august King in the Eucharist; and if such had been necessary, our Savior's complaints would have sufficed to stimulate her zeal. She knew how much Jesus felt "the lack of respect, the irreverences, the scorn, the indignities, the vain curiosity and all the other signs of ingratitude which were offered to him by so many souls"; she knew especially how he felt the indifference, the forgetfulness of

those hearts that were specially consecrated to him.

Here indeed is an admirable model of external respect. And if we now represent to ourselves something of the interior respect paid by St. Margaret Mary to the Blessed Sacrament, our admiration will only grow. As we have already mentioned, when she was in church she had no other concern but to "pay homage" to the Divine King of the tabernacle. No doubt, the very attitude of her body was a prayer; but it was especially by her soul that she adored him. Once she knelt at the foot of the altar, the world no longer existed for her. All her faculties were turned toward the object of her love. Mind, heart, will, were all concentrated on Jesus in the host. She thought of him alone, she desired him alone, she loved him alone.

She was, as it were, absorbed in the contemplation of the Eucharistic mystery. She was indifferent to whatever was happening around her. Nothing distracted her, nothing disturbed her attention. It seemed to her that "her mind withdrew from her to go and lose itself in the immense greatness of God." She was a living victim with no other desire than to be immolated and sacrificed with her loving Savior; she desired to be consumed like a holocaust in the pure flames of his love; she felt that her heart was losing itself in his, as in a burning furnace; from this divine Sun of justice all light, all knowledge came to her. She had no other impression, no other movement of soul except to love him ever more and more; she would gladly have given her life a thousand times to show him her ardent desire to love him more and more.

Is this not the interior respect required by the majesty of the one who hides his glory beneath the sacramental

species? Truly our Lord did not allow himself to be outdone in generosity. When he beheld his humble servant at the foot of his altar, he overwhelmed her with extraordinary favors and raised her to the close intimacy of mystical prayer. Then Margaret Mary was completely transformed. No wonder she could hardly tear herself away from the tabernacle. In fact, she scarcely left it. No doubt, she went away when obedience called her elsewhere; she was no longer present there in her body, but her heart did not go away; and one day as she was making her genuflection our Lord asked her, "Are you going away without your heart? Because it will never leave my presence."

Examples such as these are certainly a reproach to us for our behavior. I am not speaking of unbelievers, sceptics, indifferent Christians, spiritual dilettantes, the multitude who are Christians in name only. They come into our churches as they would go into a museum, a theater, a room of City Hall, an airline terminal. For them, the Christian temple is not the dwelling place of the Lord; the tabernacle means nothing. The divine sacrament of the Eucharist does not really exist as far as they are concerned. If they happen to be present at some solemn ceremony, a wedding or a funeral, most of them will observe a certain external decorum; but outside of such occasions how many of them permit themselves to behave in an altogether disrespectful way. They talk, laugh, joke, as if they were in the street. Of course, nobody thinks of saying even a short prayer, of offering some least act of homage to the God of the Eucharist. Alas, so many Christians behave exactly like those who have no faith whatsoever. It would be difficult to discern in their attitude a minimum of respect for Jesus hidden under the sacra-

mental species. What gross manners; what unbelievable familiarity! And how bored they seem during the religious functions. People yawn, clear their throats, blow their noses with complete unconcern, and this sometimes at the very moments when faith would call for the deepest silence and recollection. How poor the quality of the prayers that are said, amidst almost constant distraction. People are bodily present before the altar, but that's all. They look around, they watch who is coming in and who is leaving; their minds are miles away; their imagination runs riot; they think about their business, their pleasures, everything except our Lord. How far their hearts are from the One who has such a good claim on a little return for all his love!

Alas, Lord, and these people pretend to believe in your real presence! Who could guess that they do? Today you would have a thousand times more reason to repeat the complaints you formerly made to St. Margaret Mary. Idle curiosity, disrespect, irreverence, outrages . . . who can count all the instances of lack of respect, interior and exterior? Popes, Bishops, clergymen, all people with some sense have denounced the outlandish audacity and the provoking indecency of certain feminine styles. Some worldly women dare to come into church for weddings, and to present themselves to receive communion with attire which must make the devil smile with joy. It is sad but true that one can find certain pious persons who do not dare to react against these improper customs on the false pretext that fashion decrees this or that. Again, what lack of proper understanding, even among devout folk, what lack of consistency. Thus, sometimes when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed people turn their backs to it, and pay no attention

to it while they are making the Way of the Cross; others will not even stop in front of the altar; they hurry over to prostrate themselves before the statue of a favorite saint. One can see people carrying on long and completely idle conversation in church. Others sit and observe; one might think them plunged in contemplation, but do not be deceived. They are on the watch; their faces may be buried in their hands, but they still see everything that is going on, and keep an eye on everything. Instead of praying they are paying attention to what their neighbors are wearing. Dear God! How far all this is from the motionless recollection, the silence of Margaret Mary in the presence of the tabernacle. Enough of this sad list of defects. Better by far to take a good resolution in view of correcting them. Let us ask the saintly Visitandine of Paray to obtain for us the grace to follow, as generously as we can, the admirable example she has set us. Henceforth we wish to make our conduct harmonize with our faith. We wish to show our gratitude and our love to Jesus by our inner respect and our outer reverence for the Blessed Sacrament. We wish to act in such a way that our behavior before the altar may be a proof of our faith in the real presence. It has been said that Cardinal Perraud looked like a saint in a stained glass window. How often pilgrims admired his attitude when he was praying in the blessed sanctuary of the apparitions. In his bearing there was something that reminded one of St. Margaret Mary when she knelt before the Blessed Sacrament. Whoever we may be, let us in the same way edify those who may see us.

3. The Mass

Margaret Mary lived with the Eucharist in her thoughts, in her desires, and in reality by her many prolonged visits to the tabernacle.

But how does Jesus come down from Heaven to us here on earth? Through the holy sacrifice of the Mass. The words of the priest, at the most solemn moment of the Mass, the consecration, bring our Lord down to the altar. The Mass: another interesting subject for us to consider. We are sure that St. Margaret Mary can teach us to understand better its sublime character and the salutary benefits it can bring us.

1. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE

To keep to the method which we have adopted, we shall first quote without any comment the words of Margaret Mary herself. She has her own way of putting things, which enlightens, touches and penetrates. When she has had her say we shall sum up her thoughts and offer some practical conclusions of our own.

The Saint's Own Words

Here are some extracts from her letters to Father Croizet.

“Oh, how happy will you be when you can receive this divine sacrament every day, hold in your hands this God of love, and bring him into your heart. This alone would I envy you for: to be able to consume myself like a burning taper in his presence, every moment of the rest of my life. For that I

should gladly accept, I think, all the sufferings and pains one can imagine, even until judgement day, provided that I would never have to leave him, and with no other end in view save to spend myself in honoring him, in acknowledging the burning charity he shows us in this adorable sacrament, where his love keeps him a captive until the end of time; it is really on this occasion that one can repeat: "Love triumphs; Love rejoices; Love rejoices in God!"

"Oh, how happy you will be to receive him every day when you celebrate this divine sacrifice of love! With all my heart I rejoice over this with you, not only because I shall join you and unite myself with you, but also for the pleasure he will experience when he comes down into a heart which loves him, belongs wholly to him, and wants nothing but him."

"Beg him to give me the same grace, so that by making ourselves true imitators of our crucified Love, we may correspond faithfully with his designs for our sanctification; and since you wish that we write to each other from time to time, let it be only about divine love and about the cross!"

"At last, you are a priest! Every day you have the honor of sacrificing and offering up the adorable Savior to his eternal Father. What a consolation it is for me, and what a joy; may I be able to make the same offering daily through you. I am happy knowing that you enjoy such an incomparable happiness. Profit by it; and do so always with renewed fervor. I feel myself more indebted to the divine goodness for the graces given to you than if I had received them myself, for I hope that you will make better use of them than I ever would have done. I don't know how to express the sentiments of gratitude that I experience on account of the very

great kindness you have for me and of the things which you promise me. I would never have dared to hope for so much; but my Master who knows how much I need them inspired you to promise them to me. Indeed, this is all my strength, all that sustains me in the various states of suffering which I must constantly endure; sometimes these sufferings are so extreme that I would certainly falter under them without the help I am speaking of, namely, the strength I find in the heart of my loving Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; apart from him there is neither pleasure nor joy nor consolation in life."

"As for all your interior sadness and temptations, I can't see in them anything that should cause you fear, but rather joy, since your enemy always departs from you discomfited. Anyhow, what have you to fear, since you can say Mass? O my God, how happy you are, and how you should thank him for all the graces he bestows on our two souls through this means! It seems to me that we should thank him for it unceasingly."

Here are some passages from the letters St. Margaret Mary wrote to her brother, the parish priest at Bois Sainte Marie.

"I asked our Lord to give you a few more years of life, if it was his will, so that you might carry out the good desires which he inspires you with to give yourself wholly to him by consecrating to him every moment of your life, by giving yourself wholly to his service with all the purity and holiness required by your holy state of life. It seemed to me that he answered: 'Yes, I grant you all this on the conditions you propose; I should like to make a saint of him, if only he

would correspond with my designs and with the graces I will give him for this purpose.' ”

“You have won my heart so completely by the way you opened your heart to me that there is nothing, I think, which I would not willingly do to further your progress in divine love, and to help you correspond perfectly with God’s designs on you. Unless I am mistaken, he wants to bring you to great perfection. This is why, my dear brother, you must not fool yourself; he will not be satisfied with a mediocre degree of virtue in you, because he wants to give you many graces, and many more to others through you. Do not disappoint him, then, in what he expects of you—a life in conformity with the holiness of your ministry.”

“You cannot imagine, my dear brother, how much consolation the Sacred Heart of our dear Master made me feel over our conversation. It seems to me that ever since I had the happiness of seeing you my heart feels itself ever more and more closely united to yours in the heart of our Savior, through the bonds of his most pure love. I hope you will be totally consumed and transformed by his love so that we may never be separated from it for an instant. Please keep on remembering me in your Masses, for after all you should take an interest in my salvation.”

Reflections

The passage we have just quoted gives us an insight into the exalted views Margaret Mary entertained about the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and about the priesthood. She considers the priest especially in his relationship with the Eucharist. Eucharist and priesthood cannot be separated.

We see these two sacraments together at the Last Supper. The priest is the man of the Eucharist, the man of the altar, the providential agent of the new law. When the Saint speaks of the Mass, she likes to call it the "divine sacrifice of love." What an incomparable honor, what ineffable happiness to offer this august sacrifice daily. Who can dream of a more heavenly privilege than that of holding our Lord in one's hands every day and of receiving him daily into one's heart? Reread the Saint's letter to Father Croizet. This intimate friend and confidant celebrated his first Mass on March 23, 1690. Even before he offered the divine Victim for the first time the humble nun of Paray rejoiced in her heart over the luminous perspectives that opened up before the vision of the future priest. She joined him as best she could in his preparation for Holy Orders, and prayed with and for him; she rejoiced over his zealous anticipation; she encouraged him by showing him the sublimity of the goal toward which he was moving; she saluted in advance, with joy, the day of his ordination. When it finally arrived, the great mystery of love was consummated, and Father Croizet became a priest for eternity.

Margaret Mary wrote him with religious enthusiasm: "At last, you are a priest; you have the honor of sacrificing and of offering up every day the adorable Savior to his eternal Father. What a consolation for me, and what a joy; may I be able to make the same offering daily through you. I am happy, knowing that you enjoy such an incomparable happiness." One can easily see that she envies the priest who can say Mass and receive communion daily. How holy a priest ought to be in order to measure up to the dignity of his vocation. This is another thought that we frequently find ex-

pressed in the writings of St. Margaret Mary. She is thrilled when she thinks "of the delight Jesus will experience when he enters the heart" of Father Croizet, for it is a heart which loves the divine Master, belongs to him entirely, and wills only what he wills. Along with her pious correspondent she is ambitious to become "a copy of the crucified love of our Savior, and to be faithful to the designs he has for our sanctification." With what tender delicacy, and still with what supernatural frankness she speaks to her brother, to make him understand the desires of our Lord, to remind him of the "purity and holiness that are required by the priestly ministry." In one of his apparitions, Jesus told her, speaking of Father Alacoque, "I would like to make a saint out of him."

What a suggestive lesson for us, ministers of God. May all of us always realize more and more how sublime a thing our priesthood is, what an honor it confers on us, what a responsibility it places on our shoulders. Every one of us should take to heart the words Jesus said about the Saint's brother: "I would like to make a saint out of him." How the Church needs many, holy priests today! The harvest is so great, and the laborers are so few! The ranks of the clergy have been decimated. Whatever may be the reason for this, and there are many reasons, one thing is certain: we suffer from a serious crisis in the recruitment of priestly vocations. Until Providence sends us a magnificent harvest of vocations, the sacrifice of the Mass will no longer be offered in many parishes. On many altars Jesus no longer will descend, or only rarely. How sad a thought! What a tragedy that the redeeming blood of Christ should not find a chance to be applied to souls.

True, the bulk of the faithful do not seem overly pre-occupied as yet by this shortage of priests. But in religious communities, and among the choice souls, ever more numerous in the world, an admirable crusade of prayer, generosity, devotedness and efforts is under way so that the Sacred Heart may give us apostles according to his heart, give us many holy priests. In this St. Margaret Mary shows us the way. To the task, then, with unflinching courage! It is a duty of justice and gratitude for Christians to help in every way possible those who in the name of Jesus Christ are in charge of dispensing spiritual nourishment to souls. We must beg the Father of the family to send into his harvest the workers needed to sow the seed and reap the harvest. Let us pray daily that worthwhile recruits may be numerous in our seminaries. Parents should consider it an honor to give their sons to the Church; and the rich, by their generosity, should make it possible for God's chosen ones to make their way to his altars.

All of us should constantly besiege the heart of Jesus through St. Margaret Mary with our cries and supplications and our generous sacrifices. What a reward it is for someone who has helped bring a seminarian to the priesthood, to be able to say when the latter is ordained, "At last, you are a priest; you have the honor of sacrificing and of offering up the adorable Savior every day to his eternal Father. How happy I am, knowing that you enjoy such an incomparable happiness."

2: THE BLESSINGS OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE

Following St. Margaret Mary we have tried to under-

stand better the excellence of the Mass and the sublimity of the priesthood. Now, still following her lead, let us study the marvelous efficacy of the august sacrifice of our altars. The humble disciple of the Sacred Heart is going to reveal to us the blessings hidden in the Mass.

The Saint's Own Words

“Please keep this matter secret; and tell me whether I should feel bad about the unfortunate results of this cross, because God is offended in many ways by all this (she is talking about the dismissal of a postulant, Mlle. de Chamron). All the rest does not bother me a bit, even though I seem to be locked in a dark prison, surrounded by crosses which I embrace one after another. That is about all I can do right now; and in this situation the Sacred Heart of my Jesus willed to give me some help which I did not expect. A great servant of God wrote to me recently saying that as he was celebrating Mass he felt himself strongly inspired to offer the holy sacrifice for me or for my intentions every Saturday this whole year, so that I might dispose of these Masses as I chose. We shall share them, you and I, alternately. We shall also share in all the other Masses he will say. This is the present I have to give you, and which I know you will like. Do you not admire with me the mercy of the Lord, and the kindness of his adorable heart towards his poor slave, for sending me this strong support ever since the first Saturday in Lent? That was when he began to double the number of crosses he gave me. I would have succumbed under their weight if he had not given me strength through the prayers of the holy souls who pray for me. This good Father who is acting so charitably towards me does not know me, nor I

him, except by name. I have never felt greater peace. Bless the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ with me for all of this."

"You will make me very happy by saying Mass for me during March, which is the month of my Savior Jesus Christ, since so many of his great mysteries took place during it."

"Oh what a joy it must be for you when you offer this great sacrifice of love. I shall be with you in spirit, as far as I can, and I give you very willingly everything good that I shall do from now till then; rather, I pray to the Sacred Heart to apply to you and to clothe you in his own merits and dispositions. I receive communion and I hear Mass for your intentions. As for other prayers, I hardly say any, except those which are of obligation, except the rosary which I say very devoutly."

"I was fortunate enough to spend the night of Holy Thursday before the Blessed Sacrament. My soul felt deep satisfaction. I did not fail to assist in spirit at your Mass, knowing very well that I had a share in it; I have felt the effects of it by some extraordinary helps I have received . . ."

"As you wished me to, I have prayed for N . . . To tell you the truth, I am so wicked that I feared to be an obstacle to the prayers of all the holy souls who are praying for him. At first I felt that my requests were turned down, and it seemed to me that I had to struggle with the divine Heart; but in the end his love gave me the victory, I think; for I heard him say, 'Be at peace; I promise you that if he is willing to correspond with my grace; I will never withdraw my mercy from his soul, let him try to give particular homage to my heart by the virtues of patience and charity; and let him have a Mass said, or let him hear one, every First Friday, to

put himself and everything that is his, under my protection."

"I must confess, in confidence, that if his goodness did not send me the charitable help of holy souls to pray for me, I would not be able to continue. He is so good that he does not let me lack anything; he has inspired many good religious to offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass for my intentions every Friday. I was not aware of this; but now I shall have four Masses every month for the rest of my life, unless they die before I do. Some of these priests I have never seen; they write that they have never received so many graces as since they began this exercise of charity toward me; and I myself derive extraordinary help from it."

"Alas, my good Mother, if you only knew how happy I am when I see devotion to this divine Heart grow and bring forth so much fruit; when I behold people practicing with fervor and joy this source of salvation! Secular persons have had chapels built, and set up Mass foundations in his honor on the First Fridays of the month."

"I cannot express the joy you gave me both by offering this rosary and this communion for me, and by promising to offer holy Mass again for me once every month, for my intention, which is the same as that of the Sacred Heart of my loving Jesus. I hope he will repay you richly for your great charity. You have been willing to offer it for my intentions, which are that those who pray for me may also draw down on themselves many graces. I hope he will give you many such when you offer him this divine sacrifice of love, which is the richest present you could possibly have given me. It is my only joy, my happiness, my comfort and solace in this valley of tears. Tell me on what day he will inspire you to offer Mass for me. I am so grateful for the charity you show

me, and which you promise to continue showing me. I thank you in the name of the Sacred Heart of my Sovereign, the Lord of all. He will be sure to reward you for it."

"You tell me to pray for you. I do pray for you, more than for anyone else; but how can you derive any good from the prayers of a wicked creature who is only apt to draw down God's anger on you and arrest the flow of his mercies? Still, I offer for you and for the success of your plans concerning the glory of the Sacred Heart, the Masses which various holy priests and religious say for my intentions every Friday."

"After all, what can you fear? Do you not say Mass? My God, how happy you are; how great thanks you ought to offer him for all the graces he gives us through the Mass."

"I am going to start a novena for her intention, (her correspondent's sister-in-law, who was ill). I urge her to place all her confidence in this divine Heart, and to have five Masses said in honor of the Passion on Fridays."

Reflections

Despite her confused and incorrect style, Margaret Mary's language is suggestive, truly expressive. Its tone is totally supernatural. Its resonance is that of a soul mysteriously in contact with the secrets of Heaven. The humble confidant of the Sacred Heart has already shown us the sublime value of the Mass and of the priesthood; now she speaks to us of the marvelous benefits they confer. Of course, nothing is farther from her mind than to play at being a theologian; she does not go into an analysis of the marvelous

fruits of the sacrifice of the cross which is renewed on our altars; but what she affirms shows us clearly that, as Catholic doctrine teaches, she considers the Mass as the greatest of all prayers, the prayer "par excellence," the supreme act of our worship of God. The expressions she uses are worth examining.

She calls the Mass "the great sacrifice of love"—great not only because of its sublimity, but also because of the marvelous effects it produces. "There is no richer gift one can give her . . . or that she can receive." To say Masses for her, or to promise her some is "A great act of charity." To her, in the midst of her pains and trials, Mass is "a precious help," a "firm support"; it is "the strength that prevents her from succumbing under the weight of the crosses she has to carry." It is "her joy, her happiness, her comfort in this valley of tears." No wonder she thanks so effusively the priests who say Masses for her intentions. She promises them that the Sacred Heart will reward them for it. Besides, they themselves write that "they have never received so many graces as they have when saying these Masses." As for herself, she "has felt the effects of this charity by the extraordinary helps she received." It is through the Mass that "God fills souls with grace."

Indeed, she is only a poor, weak, miserable creature; because of her sins all she can do is to arrest the flow of divine mercy; her prayers are weak and unworthy; yet she feels confident, she can offer something to the souls she is interested in; she has at her disposal the prayer of Jesus himself in the sacrifice of the Mass.

What marvelous wealth! What inexhaustible treasure! All our Lord wants is that we make use of his riches, and

come to draw to our heart's content from his treasure-house. We have seen how eager Margaret Mary was to respond to the divine Master's desire. She begs her correspondents to pray for her at Mass; she promises to do the same for them and for those she loves. When religious promise to say Mass for her intentions she thrills with joy, and does not know how to thank them enough. She assists in spirit at Masses said elsewhere, and is overjoyed at joining the priests who are celebrating them. She considers as particularly efficacious the Masses celebrated on Fridays, especially First Fridays, or those offered in honor of the Passion; and finally Masses said on Saturday in honor of our Lady. All these circumstances, in fact, stir up devotion, glorify the Most Blessed Virgin and please the Sacred Heart of Jesus very much.

Let us try to profit by these precious lessons given us by the saintly Visitandine of Paray. Nothing in our holy religion is greater, more beautiful, more efficacious than the Mass. It is the memorial, the reenactment, the application of the sacrifice of the cross. The altar is another Calvary where we find the infinite riches of Christ's blood offered to us. Daily, on thousands of altars, our Lord immolates himself as he did on Golgotha. He continues to pay his Father the full homage due him. In our stead he adores, he thanks, he expiates, he prays. How important it is for us to appropriate to ourselves his fruitful immolation.

O Catholic Priest! How rich, how great you are! What a comforting and salutary role is yours! At your voice the mystery of Christmas is repeated. When you consecrate the bread and wine you assist, as it were, at a new incarnation of the eternal Word. When in your faltering hands you hold the pure, holy and immaculate host, when you offer the divine Victim, all Heaven is attentive; the angels adore; the Most High looks with favor upon our miserable earth; Purgatory

rejoices; and the pilgrims in this vale of tears are glad, thinking of the mercies of the Lord.

Nothing can ever be compared with the worth, the value of a single Mass. O happy priest of Jesus Christ! You may, perhaps, say with St. Peter, "I have neither gold nor silver to give you"; you have far better things than that to bestow. Enter into the temple of the Lord of Love; ascend the altar, and give what you have. You hold in your hands the Son of God himself, in person, truly present in the Eucharistic mystery. As you like you can dispose of the infinite merits of his immolation. You are the great benefactor of souls, families, cities, nations, of the Church herself.

Come, then, all you Christians, all pious souls. Appeal to this powerful mediator, the priest. Ask him to pray for your intentions when he says Mass. Have Masses said for your dear departed ones. Have them said for yourself during your life, and see to it that more will be said for you after you die. Attend Mass as often as you can, daily if possible and if the duties of your state allow you to do so. If you cannot come to church, you can always unite yourself in mind and heart to the Mass or Masses celebrated every day in your parish church. As the earth rotates, sunrise occurs successively for the various countries around the globe. So one can say in all truth that at every instant of the day and night there are priests who are beginning Mass to offer the divine Victim to God. Many souls strive to unite themselves to all these Masses celebrated all over the world. Another well-known form of the apostolate is the offering of Masses in reparation. Alas, so many young men and women live in such complete indifference to all that is religious! They do not sanctify Sundays or feast days; and even among bap-

tized Christians, how many miss Mass on Sundays for the idlest pretexts; some have taken the habit of attending Mass only a few times during the year. Generous souls wish to console the heart of Jesus for these guilty omissions. As a compensation, to take the places of those who do not go to Mass on days when it is obligatory, they attend as many Masses as they can on Sundays and during the week. This is certainly a way of acting which seems inspired by the admirable examples left us by St. Margaret Mary.

Let us ask her to help us understand that Mass is the finest gift we can offer to God on behalf of those we love.

In conclusion, let us call to mind this saying of St. Francis de Sales, the founder of the Visitation: "As the sun surpasses in brilliance all the other planets, and is by itself more useful than all of them together, so too the action that takes place at Mass surpasses in dignity and merit all the other actions of the day." Here is a striking thought from the Curé d'Ars: "All good works put together do not equal one holy Mass, because they are the work of men, whereas the Mass is God's action. Martyrdom is nothing in comparison; it is the sacrifice that a man makes of his life to God; Mass is the sacrifice which God makes for man of his body and blood. If a man could understand this mystery fully he would die of love."

4. How We Should Attend Mass.

With Margaret Mary we have sought to understand better the excellence of the holy sacrifice of the Mass and the infinite treasure it contains. The Saint will now teach us how

we should attend this august sacrifice. Let us observe her, first of all, as she follows Mass; then we shall try to model ourselves after her.

The Saint's Own Words

"To follow Mass well, unite yourself to the intentions of the loving heart of Jesus; ask him to apply to you the merits of the Mass according to his adorable designs upon you."

"Eternal Father, let me offer you the heart of Jesus Christ your dear and well-beloved Son, while he is offering himself to you in sacrifice. Accept this offering from me; accept all the desires, sentiments, affections, movements and acts of the Sacred Heart. All this is mine, since he is immolating himself for me, and since I no longer wish to have any desire apart from him. Accept them all in satisfaction for my sins, in thanksgiving for all your benefits. Accept them; and through his merits grant me all the graces I need, especially final perseverance. Accept them as so many acts of love, adoration, praise, which I offer to your divine majesty; for it is only by him that you can be worthily honored and glorified."

Method and prayers for assisting at Mass

"My God I believe that you are present here with the same almighty power that you possess in Heaven. I adore you along with all the holy angels and the saints. I recognize and confess that you are my God, my first beginning and my last end. O most holy, august and adorable Trinity, I prostrate myself before your greatness; I beg your pardon for all my unfaithfulness,

my tepidity, my slackness, the abuse of your grace of which I have been guilty, and for the little profit I have derived from receiving the sacraments, as well as for all the sins I have ever committed during my life. I repent of them with all my heart, for love of you alone, my God, whom I love a thousand times more than life. I would prefer to lose it rather than offend you again. I beg you by the infinite merit of your most holy sacrifice of the Mass to pardon me and to give me the grace to die rather than displease you."

Then say the "I confess."

"I offer you, O my God, the infinite merits of this sacrifice of the precious body and blood of my Savior, to make up for my sins, and to ask of you the continuation of your graces, the accomplishment of your holy will, perseverance in good works, mortification of my own will, a lively faith, an ardent charity, a firm hope, a happy death, true repentance at the end of my life. I offer them to you also for the exaltation of the Holy Church, for our Holy Father the Pope, for all the prelates and ministers of the Church, for all Christian rulers, for my country, my parents and relatives, for my congregation and all religious Orders, and in particular for this community. I beg you to provide for all our needs, spiritual, corporal and temporal. Give us, O God, a true spirit of charity and humility."

At the Gospel:

I say "Jesus was obedient even unto death . . ." etc. as it is in the Directory. After the Creed, if it is a communion day, I prepare myself. If not, I think of

some mystery of the Passion until the "Holy, Holy, Holy." On Sunday I think of the agony in the garden; on Monday I reflect on how he was betrayed by Judas and bound by the soldiers; on Tuesday, the scourging; on Wednesday, the crowning with thorns; on Thursday, the carrying of the cross; on Friday, the Crucifixion; on Saturday I think of our Lady at the foot of the cross."

At the "Holy, Holy, Holy":

"I offer you, my God, all the infinite merits of the Passion of my Savior Jesus Christ in this holy sacrifice, for the salvation of all mankind and the forgiveness of all my sins and those of the whole world. I offer them in honor of your most holy Mother, for the glory and happiness of all your saints, and for the beatification of Mother de Chantal and the relief of the souls in Purgatory."

At the Elevation:

"I adore you, my Savior, in true humility; and I offer you to your divine Father through the priest, for the expiation of my sins and for those of the whole world."

At the elevation of the chalice:

"O precious Blood, may you be poured out on my soul to sanctify it; may the love which caused you to be shed inflame my heart and purify it."

"My sweet Jesus, I unite my soul to yours, my heart and mind, my life, my intentions to yours; thus united to you I present myself to your Father. Accept

me, O eternal Father, through the merits of your divine Son whom I offer to you along with the priest and the entire Church. Behold me hidden in his wounds, covered with his blood, and clothed in his merits. Thus do I present myself to you, so that you may not reject me from before your face, but that you may grant me the grace of salvation. O my God, I thank you for all the benefits deriving from your death and Passion, and from the institution of your holy sacraments, especially the holy Eucharist."

I say the "Our Father."

"Eternal Father, I offer you my understanding, so that it may not know anything but you. My good Jesus, I offer you my memory so that I may no longer remember anything but you. Most Holy Spirit, I offer you my will, so that you may inflame it with the fire of divine love. Deck my soul with your sevenfold gifts and make of me a temple of purity. Fill me with your graces and prepare my heart to receive my God spiritually. My divine Jesus, since my sins make me unworthy to receive you into my heart, receive me into yours and unite me so perfectly that nothing may be able to withdraw me therefrom for a single moment. Let my littleness and my misery be swallowed up in the greatness of your mercy, and transform me entirely into you, so that I may no longer live but by you, in you and for your love. Come then, my only delight; take possession of this heart which is yours, and which cannot remain an instant without you."

"I thank you for giving yourself spiritually to me.

I too give myself to you unreservedly, so that you may do in me whatever you wish. Destroy this selfish spirit in me, cut down all that strives to raise itself up; annihilate whatever might try to resist you."

Reflections

As it is easy to see, Margaret Mary shows herself an admirable model of the dispositions one needs to assist profitably at the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Various authors mention three methods one can use to follow mass in the spirit of the Church. One must, they say, conform one's thoughts and affections either to the rite of the Mass—i.e. to the prayers and ceremonies which make up the ordinary prayers of the Mass; or to the ends of the Mass: adoration, thanksgiving, petition and expiation; or else to the primordial type of the Mass itself, i.e. to the mystery of the cross which is being reenacted at the altar.

All these methods are excellent, corresponding as they do with the nature of the sacrifice, with the desires of our Lord and of the Church. Every one can choose whichever method suits him best, or use all of them in turn to avoid monotony and routine, and to arouse the fervor of his piety. What should be avoided is a rigid and unintelligent formalism. Imitating St. Margaret Mary we can notice that all of these methods are found mingled in what she proposes. What emerges most clearly from her words is a feeling for the sublimity of the drama being enacted on the altar. For her, Jesus is indeed the true, the only, the all-powerful, the necessary Mediator between mankind and God the Father. On the cross and on the sacred table it is the same Victim which is

being offered for the salvation of the world. What else should one do, then, at Mass, if not unite oneself with this august Victim? Who can forget that the visible priest who celebrates the sacred mysteries is only the authorized representative of Jesus Christ, the invisible priest? Who can fail to reflect that the faithful have a role to play also when they attend Mass? They are secondary victims and priests, they should offer the sacrifice too, along with the priest, as he invites them to do at the "Brethren, pray. . ."

Such are the key ideas which inspire all the interior sentiments and the external attitudes found in St. Margaret Mary.

What recollection, silence, incomparable respect! What humility, what concern to come before the altar with a pure conscience! With what contrition she strikes her breast, considering herself a sinner unworthy to be present at the sacred rite!

Another thing that ought to impress us is this: what a truly catholic prayer is hers! True, she does not forget to pray for her own spiritual needs. What more legitimate? She offers the infinite merits of the sacrifice of her Savior's body and blood to make up for her sins, to ask God to fill her with his grace, to accomplish his will in her. She prays for perseverance in all good works, mortification of her own will; she asks for a lively faith, a burning charity, firm hope, true repentance at the end of her days, and a happy death. But her prayer does not stop there; she goes around the world as she prays. She wants the entire world to profit by the infinite riches contained in the inexhaustible treasure of the Mass. The Church, the Pope, the Bishops and priests, her country, its king, and all Christian princes, her parents, relatives and

friends, religious Orders and especially her own Visitation, the just and sinners, infidels and heretics, the poor and afflicted, those in agony, the souls in Purgatory, the living and the dead . . . she embraces all of them in her intentions; she prays for all their spiritual, corporal and temporal needs.

At Mass she loves to contemplate the heart of her divine Master present on the altar. She speaks to this divine heart, gives him everything, entrusts everything to him, expects everything from his goodness and mercy; she makes her own all the intentions Jesus had when he instituted his sacrament of love, and takes pleasure in offering them to him.

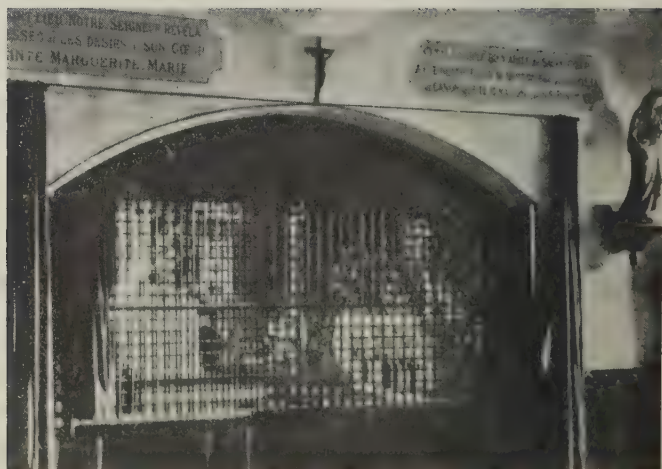
Let us imitate St. Margaret Mary. Let us never forget that the Mass is a sacred drama which makes present to us the sacrifice of the cross. We should not be mere spectators at this drama, not even attentive or moved spectators; we have a role to play in it. It is supremely important that we make the sacrifice of the Mass our own by joining religiously in what the priest does. At the present time we witness a return to true liturgical life. Much has been done to lead souls to understand and love the mysteries of Catholic worship. What a happy day it will be for Christian piety when people relearn the profound meaning of the rites and ceremonies of the Church which are so expressive. Some people take no interest in religious services because they do not effectively participate in them. They are bored; they attend Mass in a mechanical way because they have lost the true Christian spirit, because they no longer know how to put their faith to work in their lives, because they ignore in practice the wealth of the dogma of the Redemption. For too many people it is merely a question of habit, of external gestures, of sheer formalism.

We can feel sorry for those who feel no compunction when they bring to the altar a mind filled with distractions, a mind entirely preoccupied with the things of this world, a cold and sluggish heart incapable of vibrating under the impulse of heavenly emotions, a will which is inconstant and feeble, incapable of submitting to the imperious law of sacrifice, a soul that is more than half pagan.

Let fervent souls seek to console the heart of Jesus by attending Mass with the best possible dispositions. People should try to get into the liturgical life of the Church, to carry out the active role that belongs to them in the holy sacrifice, to take part in the responses and in the singing. If they did, how interesting and attractive our ceremonies would become. Soon the faithful would begin to live their faith, and God's glory would be achieved.

May all these wishes be realized through the intercession of St. Margaret Mary!

If certain Christians, unworthy of the name, assist at Mass like the executioners who crucified our Lord, like his enemies who mocked and insulted him, like the crowd which looked on, curious or indifferent, we for our part will draw near the altar as Mary, John, Magdalen and the holy women drew near to the cross; we shall strive to arouse in our hearts some of the admirable sentiments which filled their hearts.



Paray-le-Monial. Grille Through Which the Nuns of the Visitation Assisted at Mass Marks the Place of St. Margaret Mary's Visions

Chapter 5

How Margaret Mary Lived by the Eucharist

PERHAPS we should take our bearings at this point in our study of St. Margaret Mary and her relationships with the Holy Eucharist. We began by discussing some preliminary questions; next we saw how the confidant of the Sacred Heart lived with the Holy Eucharist. She visited the Blessed Sacrament as often as possible; she behaved with the utmost decorum in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament; she let her thoughts dwell as often as possible on the Blessed Sacrament; she attended Mass with the most admirable dispositions of soul. From all this we can see how Margaret Mary lived in closest intimacy with Jesus hidden under the consecrated species. The life of the Saint shows us a still more profound and eloquent mystery: what we might call her "passion" for holy communion. Not only did she live with the Eucharist, but she lived by the Eucharist. She received sacramental communion as often as she could and despite all difficulties; she made spiritual communions habitually; she shared mystically in the virtues which Christ exemplifies in his life in the Host. All this proves most clearly that the saintly Visitandine of Paray was, in the fullest meaning of the term, a eucharistic soul. It will be most interesting and salutary for us to evoke these religious memoirs.

1. Sacramental Communion.

The Saint's Own Words

"I was placed in a religious house when I was about nine years old. I was made to receive communion there, and after this all pleasures and amusement seemed bitter and insipid to me; I could not enjoy any of them, even though I sought them eagerly. When I tried to enjoy them with my companions, I always felt something that drew me away and called me aside to some place apart; and until I yielded to this attraction I could not be at peace. Then I had to start praying, nearly always prostrate, or on my bare knees, or making repeated genuflections; I did all this, but without being seen; it was a real agony for me if I was discovered."

"The only people I thought truly happy, the only ones I envied, were those who could receive communion often, and who were able to remain before the Blessed Sacrament. . . . Sometimes it happened, as a punishment for my sins, that I could not sleep on Christmas Eve. I knew that the parish priest used to say that those who had not slept could not go to communion; and since I couldn't sleep, I did not dare go to communion. Thus, this day of rejoicing became for me a day of sorrow; my tears were all my food, and I could not enjoy anything."

"What made me happiest when I left the world was the thought that I would be able to go to communion often, because I had been permitted to go only rarely up to then. I would have been the happiest person in the world if I had been able to receive more often, and spend the night alone before the Blessed Sacrament. I was so unafraid that even

though in most things I was very timid, I would not even think of my fears as soon as I was in this place of my delight. The eve of communion days I felt myself buried in such deep silence that I could bring myself to speak only by doing myself violence, on account of the greatness of the action I would accomplish the next day. When I had received communion I would have wished not to have to drink, eat, see, or speak, so great were the consolation and peace I felt. I kept myself hidden as much as possible, to learn in silence how to love my Sovereign Good, who was urging me so powerfully to return him love for love."

"If I had been able to go to communion more often my heart would have been really happy. Once, when I yearned to receive communion, my divine Master appeared to me as I was carrying out the sweepings, and said, 'My daughter, I have heard your sighs, and the desires of your heart are so agreeable to me that if I had not already instituted the sacrament of my love, I would do so now for love of you, to have the joy of coming to dwell in your soul and to rest there like a lover in your heart.' This filled me with such great love that I felt my soul completely unnerved, and unable to express itself save in these words, 'O love, O excess of love of a God toward such a miserable creature!' All my life this has been for me a powerful goad urging me on to be grateful for so much pure love."

"I must tell you, my dear Mother, about the grace I received on Good Friday, (March 28, 1687). I felt an ardent desire to receive our Lord and told him with many tears, 'O loving Jesus, I wish to be consumed by my desire for you; and since I cannot receive you today, I will continue to desire you.' Then he came to console me by his sweet presence,

and said to me, 'My daughter, your desire has touched my heart so deeply that if I had not already instituted this sacrament of love I would do it now, to make myself your food. I take such pleasure in being desired that, as often as a heart forms this desire, I look upon it with love and draw it to myself.' "

"I feel my heart on fire with a secret flame, an inner flame that swallows up all my pains. I only have one left, like a wound a little above the heart; it is a thousand times more delightful to me. This fire that consumes me seems to deprive me of any power I might have over my heart; it extends sometime all through my breast and up to my face, inundating me with such sweetness that I don't know where I am or what I am doing; this is particularly the case when I receive communion often. This it is which gives me such a burning thirst that nothing, it seems, can ever slake it except God himself, who gives me so great a desire for holy communion that nothing can give me greater joy than this bread of love. When I have received it, I remain as though annihilated before God; this lasts seven or eight minutes; during this time all my interior lies in deep silence so that I can listen to the voice of him who is all the joy of my soul."

"I have so great a desire for holy communion that if I had to walk barefoot over burning coals, it seems to me that this would not cost me anything, compared to the pain of being deprived of this great good. Nothing can give me greater joy than this bread of love; after receiving, I remain as though annihilated before my God, but with so great joy that I spend seven or eight minutes during which all my interior remains in deep silence and respect, so that I may listen to the voice of him who is the sole joy of my heart."

"I had gone to see her," writes Mother Greyfié, "in the infirmary where she had been ill for more than a year, suffering in a strange manner. She asked permission to get up the next day so that she could go to Mass. She told me, ahead of time, that if I allowed it, God would give her strength to do it, although it did not seem possible that she could. I promised her that she could go, provided she got up late and ate something first. She was so eager to go to communion that she found this last condition hard to accept. So she begged the Sister infirmarian to convince me to let her go to communion also. The Sister promised to try, convinced that I would surely allow it. But God arranged things so that I came into the infirmary just after the Sister infirmarian had left to go and look for me. I was surprised to see Margaret Mary standing, contrary to my orders; and knowing how brave she was, and how mortified, I reprimanded her sharply, exaggerating the 'fault' in her conduct, and especially her 'disobedience' and her unusual stubbornness of will. 'You may go to Mass,' I told her, 'and you may go to communion; but since your will power can make you strong enough to go to Mass when you want to, it should enable you to come and follow the community exercises from now on.' "

"The desire she felt for holy communion consumed her; she sighed only for this God of love whom she would have wished to receive every day if she could have done so without going against her Rule. The nights before communion days she spent in loving conversation with her Beloved to whom she would say, 'My soul hungers after you so much, my God! My heart desires you with its every beat!' She used to say that she lived with two devouring hungers: one for holy communion in which she received the God of her heart and

the heart of her God, and the other for sufferings, contempt and humiliation. The good use she made of this second nourishment disposed her to relish the former with all the more delight when she received it. It was usually in holy communion that our Lord bestowed on her his choicest graces."

"What hurt her the most was when she was deprived of communion on the First Fridays. This happened during the time of her great trials. She bore this uncomplainingly, but with deep sorrow, because it was our Lord himself who had ordered her to make these communions, several years previously."

Letter of St. Margaret Mary to Sister M. M. de Escures

It is in the sacred Heart of our Lord that I am writing you this. He wants it this way. Don't be surprised that I turn to you in the extreme sorrow I feel about our Sister N. (a young invalid); the reason is that this morning when I got up I seemed to hear these words distinctly: 'Tell your superiress that she has displeased me very much; to please a creature she was cruel enough (and by so doing incurred my anger), to force you to give up communion, which I had ordered you to receive on First Fridays to satisfy my eternal Father's justice by offering me to him for all the sins which are committed against charity. I have chosen you to be the victim for all this.' "

"This is what torments and worries me constantly, without my being able to get it out of my mind, since I am eager to tell it to our Mother, but I am afraid to do so. To tell you the truth, I am afraid because I wonder whether all this is not merely a ruse of the devil, who may want to make me look

different from the others by going to communion so often; or again I wonder whether all this is only my imagination and an illusion; it is not to a miserable hypocrite like me that the Lord would give similar graces. I beg you, my dear Sister, to tell me what you think about it all, and thus relieve my concern; he wants me to ask you this. Please burn this note and let it be a secret between us."

After reading this note, the Sister persuaded Margaret Mary to speak frankly with her Superioress. She did so, although at the cost of a considerable sacrifice and extreme repugnance. She told the Superioress what our Lord had said concerning the invalid Sister. The Superioress granted her the permission she wanted, provided she would ask for the cure of the sick Sister. She did this, and right away the invalid appeared to rally and was soon out of danger, although it had seemed that not much hope remained for her cure. However, whether the Superioress had forgotten to tell St. Margaret Mary that she could go to communion every First Friday, or whether the Saint herself thought she needed a special permission for this; at all events she did not go to communion but continued to ask our Lord to cure the sick Sister completely. He answered that he would not do so unless the First Friday communions were resumed. Fearing to attract attention by her conduct in this matter, Margaret Mary did not renew her request for the communions; the invalid continued in poor health and suffered a great deal; all the remedies employed did not help her. This went on for five or six months; during this time Margaret Mary visited the sick Sister often, encouraging her to profit by the trial God sent her, and exhorting her to make good use of it. Finally, she resolved to tell her Superioress "that the invalid

would not get well unless she (Margaret Mary) was allowed to begin going to communion again on First Fridays" and that this came from our Lord himself. The permission was readily granted, and immediately the sick Sister got well, which caused great joy to Margaret Mary. But she was much happier still at being able to receive the God of love, the delight of her soul, so great was the affection she had for her beloved. She could scarcely speak of anything else, and of the divine fire which consumed her and united her to this divine heart."

Deposition of Sister Peronne Marguerite Verchere

"Sister Alacoque had a lively faith in all our mysteries, especially that of the sacrament of the altar. She used to pray kneeling all the time, even when she was ill; she spent before the altar the times of silence on feast days, unless she was told otherwise. While there, she was so absorbed in spirit that she told me several times, she no longer felt her illnesses. She desired to receive holy communion daily. Since she was not allowed to do this, when she did receive she showed extraordinary ardor for God. She lived in such a manner that, when one of the Sisters passed up her turn to go to communion, the Superioress always let Margaret Mary go instead, knowing that she was always properly disposed to receive communion."

"At the same time, this divine heart was opened; a flame issued from it, so fierce that I thought I would be consumed by it, because it filled me entirely and I could no longer bear it; so I asked him to take pity on my weakness. 'I will be your strength,' he said to me, 'but listen to my voice and to

what I ask so that you may be fit to accomplish my designs. First, you must receive the Blessed Sacrament as often as obedience permits, whatever mortifications and humiliations may ensue for you from this; accept them as signs of my love. In addition, you must receive communion on the First Friday of each month.' ”

“I promise you, in the excessive mercy of my heart, that its all-powerful love will grant to all those who receive communion on nine consecutive First Fridays, the grace of final repentance; they will not die in my disgrace or without receiving the sacraments; my Sacred Heart will be their safe refuge at their last moment.”

“But why do you say that you ask for too much in reference to communion? I can assure you that I would very willingly offer for you all those which I am happy enough to make, if I were free to dispose of them, or to receive communion more frequently, as I would be so happy to do. But in religious communities nothing out of the ordinary ought to appear except love and the cross. Ordinarily, we go to communion only twice a week, on Sunday and Thursday; I am also allowed to go on the First Fridays of the month.”

Reflections

We have gathered here the principal passages which show the admirable sentiments of Margaret Mary toward holy communion. One can ask whether, in the history of souls, anyone has had the ‘passion’ for communion to such a degree. What a matchless sight! Where your treasure is, there is your heart, too. Jesus showed to his faithful dis-

ciple his own heart living in the sacrament of the altar, and told her, "I will teach you to read in the book which contains the science of love."

Margaret Mary learned this lesson extremely well. She understood that the Eucharist is the supreme gift of the heart of Jesus, and that outside of the eternal communion in Heaven, where the elect will possess the Savior in glory, there is no greater happiness for souls than to receive and possess our Lord under the mysterious form of the Host. Communion! How can we express the attraction, the divine enchantment that this word exercised on the mind and heart of Margaret Mary as a child and as a young girl at Verosvres, as a religious in the cloister of the Visitation at Paray. We have listened to her as she revealed the secrets of her soul. Her ardent desire to receive communion frequently, the perfect dispositions she brought to her communions, all this we know. But could we not derive even more profit from putting together the eloquent formulas she used?

Listen to her trying to express her divine 'passion' for frequent communion.

"She had no greater joy, no greater comfort, than to receive communion often." "She envied only those persons who went to communion frequently." "She would have been the happiest creature in the world if she had been able to receive communion often." "Her greatest joy in leaving the world was to think that she would be able to receive communion often, because up to then she had been permitted to do so only rarely." "She has so great a desire for holy communion that nothing is capable of giving her a keener joy than this bread of love." "Jesus in holy communion is the sole joy of her heart." "She experiences as it were a burning

thirst that nothing can quench except her God who gives her such a great longing for holy communion." "The ardor which she felt for holy communion consumed her."

"She sighed only for this God of love, whom she would have wished to receive every day." "The nights preceding communion days were spent in loving conversation with Jesus." "My soul has such a great hunger for you, Jesus, that I desire you at every breath I take." "She had two great hungers: one for holy communion where she received the God of her heart and the heart of her God." "Every time one of the Sisters, for some reason or other, could not receive communion on the day appointed for her, Margaret Mary was always ready to replace her; her Superioress needed only to make a sign for her to go."

To go to communion, and to go often, was the great joy, comfort and happiness of Margaret Mary. To enjoy this happiness no obstacles could stop her. Even if she had had to walk barefoot through a path of flames, this would have cost her nothing, compared with the privation of this privilege of communion. What sorrow she felt when her Superioress saw fit to deprive her of communion on the First Fridays of the month, which our Lord himself had asked her to receive. What touching complaints, what sorrow, what sublime tears on the days when illness or some impediment independent of her will obliged her to give up her communion! She felt the torments of Purgatory, where the holy souls suffer from the privation of the Sovereign Good. No wonder that our Lord himself came to console the heart of his humble and loving servant. Twice our divine Master did not hesitate to tell her that if he had not already instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist, he would have done so just for

her. We cannot forget those memorable words: "My daughter, I have heard your sighs, and the desires of your heart are so pleasing to me that if I had not instituted my divine sacrament of love I would do so now out of love for you, to have the joy of abiding in your soul and of taking my rest in your heart. I find such pleasure in being desired that, so often as a heart forms this desire, I look upon it with love and draw it to myself."

With regard to the dispositions preparatory for holy communion, who can think of more perfect ones than those which we see in the soul of the Saint?

She keenly realizes her indignity, all the more so as our Lord himself took care to give her a very clear understanding of it. After that, a desperate conflict takes place. On the one hand, an irresistible desire for communion urges her on; on the other hand the consciousness of what she calls her great misery makes her want to withdraw from the holy table. There ensues a horrible conflict that tears her very being apart. She knows what agonies each communion costs her. She tells us that two great hungers devour her: the first for communion itself; the second for "suffering, contempt and humiliation." The good use she made of this second nourishment disposed her to enjoy the sweetness of the first. She always remembered Jesus' injunction: "Go to communion as often as obedience permits, whatever mortifications and humiliations this may bring you; accept these as tokens of my love." On the eves of her communions she felt herself plunged into such profound recollection that she could speak only by doing violence to herself, so taken up was she with the greatness of the action she was going to perform."

How can one relate the unspeakable effects produced

in Margaret Mary by the reception of the holy Eucharist? She had hardly made her First Communion at the age of nine when Jesus took full possession of her soul. He wished to be its absolute Master. From then on a sort of bitter taste accompanied all the pleasures and diversions that she sought with her companions. None of them meant anything to her any longer. An invisible and overpowering force drew her away, plunged her into recollection, caused her to kneel and prostrate herself, and drew her to constant prayer. The mysterious action of the Eucharist continued showing itself on the pious young girl at Verosvres. After receiving communion "she would have wished not to eat, drink, speak, or see anything, so great were the peace and consolation she felt. So she kept to herself as much as she could, so as to learn to love her sovereign Good who urged her so strongly to return him love for love." In short, she was experiencing God's mystical attraction. When she left the holy table, "she felt her heart filled with a secret and interior flame, which swallowed up all her sorrows. There only remained a wound which she felt slightly above her heart, but which brought her unspeakable joy. The fire which consumed her seemed to take away all control over her heart, and extended sometimes throughout her breast, even to her face, suffusing her with such sweetness that she did not know where she was or what she was doing. She remained before God in complete annihilation, and this might last seven or eight minutes, during which time a deep inner silence filled her being so that she could hear the voice of him who was her soul's only delight." O sublime mysteries of love! Is Margaret Mary not the peerless model of all souls who receive communion? No doubt her example is not imitable in all respects; but

what penetrating light it affords us by which we ought to judge our own conduct.

Jesus is present in the tabernacle, not only to live in the midst of us, to receive our worship, to hold court as it were. He is there above all so that he can come to dwell in those living tabernacles, our souls. He hides under the mysterious veil of the Host to be the food our supernatural life requires day after day. He is the bread from Heaven, the true bread we need to eat daily. All the effects that material food produces in our bodies are realized in our spiritual life by holy communion. Our Lord repeats, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood will have everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day." Yes, to receive communion is to bring God into ourselves in an unspeakable manner. It is to prepare ourselves, in a sovereignly effective manner, for eternal and glorious life.

By the voice of the Popes, Bishops and Councils, the Church untiringly reminds the faithful of these important truths. She has always done so; today her words seem even more pressing. She addresses them to all: to the little children as soon as they reach the age of reason, as St. Pius X decreed; she calls young people, so sorely tormented by the gnawing itch of passion; she calls fathers and mothers who need so much light and strength to measure up to their heavy responsibilities; she speaks to the aged, tottering on the threshold of death. She cries to all, "Come and share the divine banquet. Come as often as you can, every month, every week, every day; all you need is to be in the state of grace and to have a right intention, i.e. a sincere desire to become holier, to correct your faults, to profit by the heavenly

Gift you receive. Stir up your faith, your hope, your love, your holy desire. Why should it be necessary for me, your mother, to invite you with so much insistence to share in the sacred banquet that our Savior's infinite charity has prepared for you? Do you not understand that going to communion often ought to be the greatest happiness of your life?"

Alas, how far we are from the example set us by the Saints, in particular by St. Margaret Mary!

Let us forget the obstinate ones who don't want to receive communion even at Easter. Let us not bother, either, with those who seem to think they are doing our Lord a great favor by kneeling once a year at the holy table. Let us concentrate for the moment on souls who are devout, who do go to communion frequently, or at least could do so. Why do they show so much languor and tepidity? Why so little progress? Here is why: they don't think their communions are really all that important. They let routine spoil their communions; they prepare badly for them; they do next to nothing to arouse their fervor so as to exploit the wonderful riches found in holy communion; they oppose obstacles to the liberality of Jesus; they are too careless during thanksgiving. True, they are in the state of grace; that is a good deal; but there is something lacking as regards their proper intention.

Let us ask St. Margaret Mary for a share in her marvelous sentiments of fervor. Like her, let us eagerly desire to receive communion and to do so often; but let us try to bring to the holy table dispositions that resemble hers somewhat. Then communion will truly be for us the great means of transforming our souls.

2. On Spiritual Communion.

The previous chapter has shown Margaret Mary to us as the matchless ideal of souls who receive communion and wish to do so well. We mentioned her angelic longing for communion, the marvelous dispositions of humility, faith and love which she brought to the holy table; and the admirable effects produced by the reception of Jesus' body and blood in the humble nun of Paray. It would have required the pen of a saint to do justice to all these sublime supernatural realities. At least, we were able to listen as the Saint herself spoke to us in her own words of the mysteries of her interior life. Now it will help if we consider her as a model of spiritual communion. This is another point of view, full of interest and very helpful for Christian piety.

The Saint's Own Words

One Good Friday (March 28, 1687) she experienced a vehement desire to receive our Lord; as she could not do so she said to him with tears: "Loving Jesus, I would like to be consumed by my desire for you; and since I cannot receive you today, I shall at least desire you." The divine Master came to console her by his sweet presence and said: "My daughter, your desire has penetrated my heart so deeply that if I had not already instituted this sacrament of love I would do it now so that you might be nourished by my body. I am so happy when I am desired that every time a heart conceives this desire, so often do I look lovingly upon it, to draw it to myself."

"When you go to the refectory, place yourself in my

dorable heart; and let every morsel you eat be a spiritual communion."

"When I go to the refectory I shall ask Jesus to protect me from myself, and to help me so that this food which I am about to eat for love of him and by obedience may truly be for me a spiritual communion. By it may his purity take over my intentions, his grace take possession of my soul, and his love fill my heart, so that I may never cease loving him, never separate myself from him, never forget him."

Prayer of a Soul Which Longs to Receive Holy Communion

Great God whom I adore beneath these frail species, is it possible that you have brought yourself so low as this, so that you might come to me and remain bodily with me? To give shelter to you the Heavens themselves are not worthy; yet in order to be with me you content yourself with these poor species! Oh, incredible goodness, could I believe this marvel if you yourself had not deigned to assure me of it? More, could I have ever dared to imagine that you would deign to enter my mouth? You consent to rest upon my tongue and to descend into my stomach; and to make me willing to receive you, you promise me a thousand benefits. O God of majesty who are also the God of love, why am I not all understanding, so that I might grasp this mercy of yours? Why am I not all heart, to appreciate it; all tongue to proclaim it? You, O God of my heart, created me to be the object of your love and the subject of your unspeakable goodness. The Angels never weary of beholding you; they desire

this favor even while enjoying it; and would I not desire to see you also? Since you want this, my loving Savior, since my own needs oblige me to desire it, and since your goodness permits me to hope for it, I open my heart to you, I offer you my bosom, my mouth and my tongue so that you can occupy them.

Come, O divine Sun, come to me. I am plunged in the horrible darkness of ignorance and sin; come and drive away these shadows and let the divine light of your knowledge shine forth in my soul.

Come, O loving Savior. Once you sacrificed your whole self to redeem me from Hell. I have fallen again under the miserable slavery of sin. Come once more, and this time burst my bonds, break my chains asunder, and give me back true liberty.

Come, O charitable Physician of my soul. You bathed me in your blood in Baptism, and made me whole and holy, far beyond what I deserved. By my own fault I ran the risk of incurring many dangerous maladies. They spread disgust in my heart, weaken my courage, and bring death to my soul. Come, then, and heal me, O divine Physician; I need you more than the paralytic whom you asked whether he wanted to be cured. Yes, O my God, yes I do want to be cured for good; you know the weakness of my desire, so build it up in me by the strength of your divine love.

Come, O most faithful, most tender, most kind and loving of all Friends; come into my heart. She whom you love is suffering from all sorts of infirmities and dangerous lassitudes that could lead to death. You

know, you can read the depths of my heart, that if up to now I have been oblivious of my misfortunes and imprudent in facing dangers, now by your grace I realize my true plight; I cry out in alarm, I implore your help. In the name of your incomparable friendship, and of your plighted word, I call upon you to come and succor me. Come, and do not allow me ever to do anything that would make you withdraw from me. Promise me, as you did St. Elizabeth, that you will always remain with me.

Come, O life of my heart, O soul of my life, O only strength of my soul. O bread of angels become incarnate for love of me, sacrificed for my ransom, and waiting here to be my food! Come and fill me abundantly; come and uphold me powerfully; come and make me grow vigorously; come and make me live by you and in you; but do it in truth, O my only Life and my whole Good!

If a body was separated from its soul, how could it call to it? How could it seek it? Do I understand so little what you are, and what I am, not to know what I am without you? Come, my God and my All; come and give life once again to my soul which languishes for the One who brings it beauty, movement and vigor. Take, I beg of you O Jesus, my one Love, all my thoughts; and by the strength of your love which is stronger than fire and sweeter than honey, withdraw my heart from everything under Heaven. Make me die from love of your love, as you did for mine. Ah, Lord, sound this heart and pierce it so completely that it may no longer contain anything earthly or human.

Reflections

Real love tends toward union with the object loved; it wishes to be one with the loved object. This law governs all beings. This desire is the essence of love. But when the object of love is not present for a more or less lengthy period, when its possession requires more or less difficulty, then in the loving heart intense desires are aroused, passionate longings are exasperated, and the most audacious aspirations are formed. We know the transports of love expressed by the Beloved in the Cantic of Canticles. We only need to remember Magdalen going to the tomb and finding it empty. In her sublime ecstasy of love she took Jesus for the gardener and cried, "If you have carried him off, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." That is how it is with the soul that hungers and thirsts after holy communion. Thus it was with Margaret Mary. Jesus in the Eucharist was the sun, the center of her life, her all. She wished to live only by him and for him. She knew no greater comfort on earth than to receive communion and to do so frequently; but she could do so only once a day; and even this was not allowed her every day.

She found a way to make up for the rarity of her sacramental communions; this was to multiply her spiritual communions, a simple and practical solution indeed. Spiritual communion consists in thinking of the divine Guest in the tabernacle, and desiring to receive him into our hearts. We have quoted some passages which refer more directly to this habit of spiritual communion; but we could say in all truth that Margaret Mary's whole life was one continual spiritual

communion. As soon as the Eucharist was mentioned, her soul palpitated, her heart was inflamed with enthusiasm, her pen found formulas which seem to have fallen from the lips of the Seraphim. So much love is concentrated in the little white Host! What is communion if not the immense love of Jesus who gives himself to each soul? Is it not a glimpse of Heaven even on earth, a foretaste and a pledge of eternal glory? Thence arise from those aspirations that the Saint expressed. With all the fibres of her being she called down into her heart the One whom she names "her Sun, her Savior, her Physician, the gentlest, tenderest, most beautiful and faithful of all friends, her center, her life, her all." Weeping, she protested that she would never cease desiring him and "being consumed by desire for him." How could the divine Master not be touched by such admirable transports? So he came down and consoled his daughter who loved him so much; he did not fear to tell her that "her desire had penetrated so deeply into his heart that if he had not already instituted the sacrament of love he would have done so just for her." To show her how much he appreciated her spiritual communions, he added this solemn declaration: "I take such pleasure in being desired that so often as a heart forms this desire, so often will I look upon it with love, and draw it to myself."

O pious souls, remember the sublime aspirations of Margaret Mary and the consoling promises of our Lord. Once again, return to the school of the glorious confidant of the Sacred Heart. Learn from her how to make spiritual communions, and appreciate the advantages this practice affords.

We can go to sacramental communion only once a day,

according to the discipline of the Church, interpreting the will of her divine Master.

But there is another kind of communion which depends only on our free choice, our willingness; it can be ours completely and unceasingly. This is spiritual communion. In thought, in our hearts, and in our desires we can receive communion as often as we wish, a thousand times a day, at every instant if we so desire. At night when we cannot sleep, what is easier than to form the desire of receiving our divine Friend into our hearts? Wherever we may be, whatever we may be doing, spiritual communion is possible for us. You are at home, in the solitude and silence of your room; or you are lost in a noisy crowd on some festive occasion; or you are working at a desk, in a shop, in a store, in the fields; or you are visiting friends, or travelling, or taking a walk and admiring the beauties of nature — what prevents you from recollecting yourself for a moment, from thinking of him who is infinite love and who remains in the captivity of the tabernacle? What prevents you from telling him from the depths of your soul, "O good Savior, I cannot receive you sacramentally right now; but come into my heart spiritually. I long for you; creatures cannot satisfy me. I hunger and thirst after you. Come, enlighten and strengthen me; give me some share in the marvelous graces which accompany the reception of your august sacrament of the altar."

It is true, however, that there are times which are more favorable, circumstances which are more propitious for engaging in the practice of spiritual communion. Such would be the time spent hearing Mass, making visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and mealtime.

When the faithful attend Mass, on Sundays or during

the week, if they cannot go to communion sacramentally they should not fail to arouse in themselves a fervent desire of receiving Jesus spiritually in their hearts. They should strive to elicit the interior acts made by those who receive sacramentally the body and blood of the Savior. This is an excellent means of sharing in the sacrifice taking place on the altar. It is hard to conceive of a pious soul being at the foot of the tabernacle to adore, thank, or pray for graces, and not feeling the sweet and compelling need to unite herself spiritually with the God of love.

Finally, there is an action which is in itself common, unspiritual; which we share with the animals. To live we need to feed our bodies, to eat and to drink. How important it is to transmute, to spiritualize this action! Piety comes to our help and suggests prayer before and after meals. Every time we sit down at table, mortification, gratitude and charity are virtues that we should invite to sit down with us. But there is something else we can do to spiritualize this need we have of nourishing our bodies. We know that Jesus established striking and symbolic relationships between the food of our bodies and the food of our souls. It was not by accident that Christ promised the Eucharist shortly after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. It was after the ritual meal of the Jews, after the eating of the Paschal Lamb, that he instituted his sacrament of love. To bring about this prodigy he used the bread and the wine that were on the table. So, when we take our meals it should be impossible for us not to think of the holy Eucharist and not to make spiritual communions. This is something St. Margaret Mary recommended to her novices and that she practiced herself. "Let every morsel you eat be for you a spiritual commu-

nion." "When I go to the refectory I shall pray to Jesus to guard me from myself, and ask him that this food which I take for love of him and through obedience may be a spiritual communion for me."

Insofar as our weakness allows, let us imitate the example of our Saint. Like her, let us make much of spiritual communions. These are a rich source of spiritual blessings for our souls. Have we ever thought that if he so wishes Jesus can use a spiritual communion to confer on us the same graces that a sacramental communion would produce? How fervent and fruitful all our sacramental communions would be if they were only prepared for by many spiritual communions.

3. Mystical Sharing in the Virtues and States of Jesus in the Host.

Margaret Mary communicated sacramentally as often as she could, and with dispositions of angelic fervor. Of her entire life she made an uninterrupted spiritual communion. In these two ways she shows herself to us an admirable model, a marvelous ideal which we should strive to reproduce as closely as our weakness will permit. Here is another mystery which all true Christians should contemplate, especially religious souls and all those who by their vocation are bound to tend to perfection.

For Margaret Mary organized all the actions of her life in function of the Eucharist; she reproduced in her own life the various lives exemplified by our Savior in the tabernacle; she was a victim like Jesus hidden under the sacramental species; she tried to share in some way in all the virtues that our

Lord shows us in his sacrament of love. These are some of the most interesting and edifying aspects found in the life of St. Margaret Mary. We must study these and try to profit by the persuasive lessons that flow from them. Before indulging in our personal reflections, let us listen to the Saint.

The Saint's Own Words

“Since I had resolved to pay constant homage to his victim-state in the most Blessed Sacrament, I felt I should sacrifice my being to him unceasingly, through love, adoration, annihilation and conformity with his state of mystical death in the holy Eucharist. I must practice my vows after his example. He is deprived of everything so that he even has to depend on his creatures, and receives from them what they condescend to give him. In the same way, by my vow of poverty, I must not only give up the goods and commodities of life, but also all pleasure, spiritual consolations, desires and affections, all personal interests; I must let myself be deprived of all; I must give up all as if I too were dead or insensible to all things.”

“Who can be more obedient than Jesus in the holy Eucharist, where he comes the moment the sacramental words are spoken, whether the priest be good or not, and whatever he may choose to do with him? He allows himself to be brought to hearts sullied by sin, which he abominates so much. So too, in imitation of him, he wants me to abandon myself to my Superiors, whoever they may be, so that they can make whatever use of me that they see fit, without my ever showing the least repugnance, no matter how little I like what they are doing. I must say, ‘Jesus was obedient even

unto death on the cross; I too wish to obey till my last breath in homage to the obedience of Jesus in the Host. Its whiteness teaches me that I must be a pure victim to be offered to him, a spotless victim, so that I may possess him, pure in body, in heart, in intention and affection. To be completely transformed into him I must lead a life without curiosity, a life of love and privation; I must rejoice when I am despised and forgotten, to make up for the forgetfulness and lack of respect which my Jesus suffers in the Host.' "

"My inner and outward silence will be observed strictly to honor my Lord. When I speak, let it be to pay homage to this Word of the Father, this divine Word hidden in the Host. When I go to meals, I will unite this action with the divine food by which he sustains our souls in the holy Eucharist. I shall ask him that every morsel may be a spiritual communion which will unite me to him and transform me entirely into him. My sleep will honor the repose he takes in the bosom of his Father and in the Host; my sufferings and mortifications I will offer up to repair the outrages committed against him in the Host. I shall unite all my prayers to those which the Sacred Heart offers for us in the Eucharist. In the same way I shall unite my office to the praise which his adorable heart gives to his eternal Father. When I genuflect, I shall think of the ones made before him in mockery during his Passion, and I will tell him, "Let every knee bend before you, O great God, now so lowly in the Host. May all hearts love you; may all souls adore you; may all wills be subject to you.' When I kiss the ground I shall say, 'I am doing it to pay homage to your infinite greatness, by confessing that you are all, and I am nothing.' "

"After saying all this, I tremble for fear lest I fail to put

it into practice; as I was going to communion he made me understand that he himself was coming to me to impress on my heart the sort of holy life he leads in the Eucharist, a life entirely hidden and annihilated in the eyes of men, a life of death and sacrifice; and that he would give me the strength to do what he wished me to do."

"So, do everything in love and humility; you are doubly bound to this by the vocation which is yours of honoring the humiliated life of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. You must then offer yourself to him as nothingness before its creator, who will give it whatever being he pleases, and whom nothing can resist."

"When you go to mental prayer, unite it to that which Jesus makes for you in the Blessed Sacrament."

"To hear Mass well, unite yourself to the intention of this loving Heart; ask him to apply to you the merit of the Mass, according to his adorable designs on your soul."

"When you go to the refectory, place yourself in this adorable Heart, and let every morsel you eat be for you a spiritual communion."

"Honor the annihilation of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament by offering your recreations to his Sacred Heart; accept willingly all the mortifications, humiliations and contradictions you may meet with there, or elsewhere, without complaining or excusing yourself."

"Unite your silence to that of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Restrain every useless word, everything that might turn to your advantage or give displeasure to your neighbor."

"Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is poor, so that he may enrich us. He will do this if we put aside the love of ourselves and of creatures."

“Jesus obeys the priest, be he good or wicked, and shows no repugnance when he is brought to sullied hearts full of sin. You too must always obey without showing any signs of dissatisfaction, renouncing your own judgment; keep your eyes cast down so that you can raise those of your soul towards Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.”

“You must practice the presence of God by considering what Jesus does in the Blessed Sacrament, so that you may imitate him and stay within his Sacred Heart in whatever way your different exercises require. Offer God his holy dispositions to make up for those which you lack, so that you may accomplish your actions well, and also to make up for all the faults which you may have committed in performing them.”

Love-promises in Honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

“May Jesus live in the hearts of his faithful lovers who desire to consecrate their actions in homage to His Sacred Heart in the Blessed Sacrament.

“First of all, in the morning, after putting ourselves under the protection of the Most Blessed Virgin, we will beg her to offer us to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, to honor the offering which he there makes of himself to his eternal Father; we shall unite our souls to his, so that he may keep them free from sin; we shall unite our hearts to his, so that he may burn out of them whatever displeases him. We must unite everything we are to what he is, and beg him to make up for all that we lack.

“We shall unite our mental prayer to his in the Blessed Sacrament which he offers for us; and at the end of our



Paray-le-Monial. Chapel of Repose for the
Reliquary of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

prayer we shall offer God the prayer of his divine Son to make up for the defects in ours, for the time wasted in it.

"During the Office we shall join our praises to those offered by Jesus, and shall try to share his holy intentions and partake of his burning purity, so that he may be in everything the One who makes up to his Father for our deficiencies.

"See how obedient he makes himself to the priests, good or bad, and how he puts himself entirely into their hands to die there mystically; how he takes up the condition of a Victim, allowing himself to be immolated and sacrificed according to their intentions, without showing any resistance. To conform myself to him I shall be prompt in obeying; and like an immolated victim I shall put myself into the hands of my superiors whatever their personal qualities, so that dying entirely to my own will, inclinations, passions and aversions, I may let them freely dispose of me as they wish; I shall not show any repugnance I may feel. The effort I must make to overcome myself will honor that which he does to himself when he must enter souls stained by sin, of which he has so much horror that each time it renews his mortal agony in the garden.

"His life is entirely hidden from creatures, who can see only the poor, miserable species of bread and wine. I too must keep myself hidden so completely that my greatest joy will be to let only the poorest and most abject side of my personality show itself. I must keep myself hidden under the ashes of humility through being scorned and rejected by creatures, so that I may comfort my Jesus in the scorn, injuries, sacrileges, profanations and other indignities which he endures without complaining in his hidden eucharistic life. In

view of this I will never complain or excuse myself, remembering always that everybody has a right to accuse me, humble me, and make me suffer, since the love of the Sacred Heart obliges me to endure anything without complaining, or saying that I can't take any more.

"Jesus is always lonely in the Blessed Sacrament, conversing only with God. To be like him I shall try to live a solitary life, conversing inwardly with him alone. My mind will admit no other curiosity except to know him, so that my soul may always be adoring him and my heart eager to love him.

"He is there in a sort of deathly state, as far as the life of his senses is concerned. I must then make it my joy to renounce pleasure and everything which might procure it for me, seeking to mortify whatever might satisfy my senses.

"Jesus is poor in the Blessed Sacrament. He has given us all he has, without keeping anything back for himself, so that he might win our hearts and fill them with himself. To imitate him, and to possess his all-loving Heart, I must detach myself from myself, and learn to despise myself, and be glad if others do the same to me.

"Jesus maintains a perpetual silence in the Blessed Sacrament. I wish to imitate this by my own exterior and interior silence, not speaking except as the Rule or charity may require.

"When I go to the refectory I shall ask Jesus to keep me from myself; let this food which I am about to take for love of him and by obedience be a spiritual communion for me; by it may his purity take over my intentions, his grace fill my soul, and his love inflame my heart, so that I may never

cease loving him, or ever forget him, or separate myself from him.

“When I go to recreation, I shall be careful to offer it to the Sacred Heart of our Lord; I shall speak of him; and I shall accept willingly the mortifications and humiliations which may come to me; I shall consecrate all my words to this divine Word, so that he may not permit me to say a single one which does not contribute to his glory.

“When I go to warm myself, I will beg him, since he is the burning furnace of pure love in the Blessed Sacrament, to enkindle our hearts so powerfully with the fire of his divine love that they may be consumed and may become all-loving, to love him constantly.

“When I am thirsty, I will suffer it to relieve the thirst the adorable Heart of Jesus feels to be known and loved in this sacrament of love.

“When I take my rest, I will unite it to that which Jesus takes from all eternity in the bosom of his Father, and to that which he takes in the Blessed Sacrament and in all pure souls. I will offer him all my respirations and my every heart-beat as so many acts of love, adoration, praise and sacrifice of all my being, to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. I shall ask him to let this repose give me new strength to serve him better.

“When I have the happiness of receiving him sacramentally, I will frequently offer to the eternal Father the holy dispositions of Our Lady’s heart at the moment of the Incarnation. I shall unite them to those of her divine Son, to make up for those which I lack to receive him worthily. And when I have received him, I shall offer him to his eternal Father

as my thanksgiving, my praise, my adoration and love, begging him to compensate for all the insufficiencies of my past life, and to accomplish in me all his designs, all his desires. I shall ask him, since he never transgressed the laws which his love prescribe to him in this divine sacrament, not to permit me to grow negligent in the keeping of my holy Rules."

Reflections

Clearly, in the advice she gave to her novices, as well as in the love-pact that she made with our Lord, Margaret Mary offers us a sort of little treatise on the spiritual life, a real code of perfection. And the sublime model she proposes to us for imitation is none other than Jesus himself present in the holy Eucharist. It is worth noting that for the saintly Visitandine, Jesus, although hidden beneath the eucharistic veil, and in spite of the mysterious appearance he has of being dead, is really and truly living. He looks inactive; but nobody exercises a more beneficent activity. So Margaret Mary wants us to model our conduct on that of our Savior. She wants us to "consider what Jesus is doing in the Blessed Sacrament, and then conform ourselves to him." We must make our own the dispositions of his adorable Heart in the various exercises we perform. In him we find everything we need in order to perform well and to make up for the faults we commit in performing them.

If we wish to begin the day well, we must put ourselves under the protection of the Most Blessed Virgin, "and ask her to offer us to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, to venerate the offering he makes of himself to his eternal Fa-

ther." "We must unite all we are with what he is, and beg him to make up for what we lack."

Next comes mental prayer. How should we spend this precious time? An excellent way is "to unite our prayer to that of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament." At the end of the exercise, "we shall offer to God the prayer of his divine Son so as to repair the defects and the loss of time we have been guilty of in our own prayer."

The same thing for the Office. How inadequate are the words formed by our lips! How many imperfections in this external tribute of praise! So we should "unite our praise to that of Jesus and try to share his holy intentions, to partake of his burning purity." In this way he will become "everywhere our substitute in our duties towards his divine Father."

Next comes Mass. We have already had an opportunity of speaking at length of this matter, basing ourselves on the words and example of Margaret Mary; but since the daily schedule of spiritual exercises again brings to our attention the august sacrifice of the altar, we would like to repeat this suggestion the Saint made to her novices: "To hear Mass well, unite yourselves to the intentions of this loving Heart, and ask him to apply to you the merit of his sacrifice according to his adorable designs on you."

We might make the same remarks concerning the reception of sacramental communion. We have already studied the incomparable sentiments of fervor that filled Margaret Mary when she received communion. It will do us good to hear her tell us again, "when I have the happiness of receiving him sacramentally, I shall offer to the eternal Father the holy dispositions of heart found in the most Blessed Virgin at the moment of the Incarnation; I shall unite them to those of her

divine Son, to make up for those which I lack in order to receive him worthily."

When we have received communion, Jesus is all ours, our possession, our wealth, our treasure; he is, in all and for all, our divine Substitute. Once he is in our hearts we must not forget "to offer him to his eternal Father as our thanksgiving, our praise, adoration, and love." Our Savior has never failed in the observance of the laws which his love prescribed for him in the sacrament of the altar. A religious should ask him for the grace "never to grow negligent in keeping her holy Rules."

We must sanctify all our daily actions, keeping them with the salutary influence of the Host.

When we go to recreation we must pay attention to offer this to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We should speak of him; we should willingly accept the mortifications and humiliations which will come to us; we must consecrate all our words to the divine Word, so that not one of them may be pronounced which does not contribute to his glory.

If we need to go and warm ourselves, since Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the "furnace of burning charity," we must ask him to "enkindle our hearts with his divine love, so that by being consumed they may become all love, to love him constantly."

Do we suffer from thirst? Accept it "to satisfy the thirst that the adorable Heart of Jesus has to be known and loved in his sacrament of love."

Is it mealtime? We must consecrate ourselves to the adorable Heart of our Master; we must try to change the "morsels we eat into so many spiritual communions; we re-

call the necessity of nourishing our souls with the intentions, the virtues and the graces of our Lord."

When the day is finally over and time comes to rest, true piety provides us with a whole program. Sleep which is so much like death must be united to that repose which Jesus takes from all eternity in the bosom of his Father, to that which he takes in the Blessed Sacrament and in all pure souls. Then, we should offer to Our Lord "every breath and heart-beat, as so many acts of love, adoration and praise. By thus sacrificing our entire being we shall pay him homage in his divine sacrament, and ask him to let us draw from this repose new strength to serve him better."

"Consider what Jesus does in the Blessed Sacrament, so as to imitate him." We have seen how Margaret Mary carried out this program, by letting her whole day be inspired by the dispositions of our Lord and the sentiments of his Sacred Heart.

She carried out this program in another, no less admirable fashion. She strove to share the virtues which our Savior exemplifies under the eucharistic veils. All the Christian virtues, and especially those which form the matter of the vows of religion, can be found in Jesus in the Host as in a sovereignly expressive model.

Let us go over the beautiful considerations of St. Margaret Mary on poverty, chastity and obedience.

Jesus is the rich Lord of all creation, to whom everything belongs. Heaven and earth are his domain. God the Father has given him all the nations for his inheritance; yet here below he has made himself the poorest of the poor, out of love for us. Poor in the cradle at Bethlehem, poor in the house at Nazareth; poor on Calvary. But he is "poor espe-

cially in the Blessed Sacrament." He has gone so far as to lay aside his human form. If we can so express it, he hides the reality of his adorable body under borrowed appearances. Now, if he has reduced himself to such destitution, if he has embraced such poverty, it was "to make us rich" by giving us himself. "It was to give us all he has, without keeping back anything." The only condition he puts to his liberality is that we should imitate him. The way to win his all-loving Heart is to lay aside the love of ourselves and of creatures; it is to turn away from ourselves and as it were, to despise ourselves.

Jesus is the living antithesis of sin; he is the divine splendor of innocence; he is the purity of virgins. For a mother, he wanted the Virgin of virgins, the Immaculate Virgin herself. All this is proclaimed by the whiteness of the Host. This whiteness is an eloquent symbol of the purity needed by souls who desire to approach him, of the chastity which he expects the privileged spouses of his heart to practice. The soul that aspires to possess him, to sacrifice itself by vowing itself to his service, must be "a spotless victim, pure in body, heart, intention and affection." O sacred white Host, inspire us with a profound horror for everything that suggests sin, near or far. Make us cherish the delicacy of conscience we need; keep in us the worship of the angelic virtue of chastity.

What can we say of our Lord's obedience in his sacrament of love? He seems to have given up all free choice of his own. He is completely at the mercy of his priests, whoever they are — other St. Johns, or other Judases. He wills what they will. He goes where they take him; he gives himself to those to whom they wish to give him, whether these be souls as pure as angels or sullied by the vilest of sins. No

sooner are the sacramental words pronounced than Jesus comes down upon the altar. Yes, Margaret Mary could cry out, "Where is there more perfect obedience than that of Jesus in the Eucharist?" He is truly the Savior who was obedient even unto the death of the cross. "He puts himself into the hands of his priests, to die there mystically"; "He assumes the state of victim to allow himself to be immolated and sacrificed according to their designs, without showing any resistance. What admirable passivity!"

So must the religious act. She should imitate Jesus in the holy Eucharist.

Prompt in her obedience, she should place herself in her superiors' hands, whoever they may be. She will not look at the human aspect of the persons who exercise authority; she will strive to die to her own will, inclinations, passions or aversions; she is willing to let her superiors dispose of her as they like, without showing any repugnance. If at times obedience requires painful sacrifices, a true religious will accept these willingly "to honor the violence Jesus must do himself when he must enter souls sullied by sin"—a violence which renews the mortal agony he endured in the Garden of Olives.

This is how Margaret Mary proposed to practice her vows "after the model of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament."

Her attention had also been drawn to the silence and solitude that surround the Host in the tabernacle.

How silent and solitary he is indeed in the tabernacle! He, the eternal Word, the substantial Word of the Father, He who while on earth let fall from his divine lips so many sublime discourses, who thrilled the crowds to the point that in their enthusiasm they kept repeating: "No man has ever

spoken as this man does!" This same Jesus remains silent in the mystery of his Eucharist. "As regards the life of the senses, he is as though he were dead." We do not see him; he does not speak, or make himself heard. He has no communication or sensible relations with us or with the world. It is only through the veil of the sacred species and in the light of faith that we know he is present. He has, so to speak, wrapped himself in a mantle of solitude. His silence is unbroken. He converses only with God. What an example for religious souls. They too should establish in themselves a silence both exterior and interior. They should not give any rein to the natural curiosity of their senses. Let them learn to live in recollection. Let them refrain from every useless word, everything tending to their own advantage, or to the discredit of their neighbor. Let them strive to speak "only as the Rule or charity directs." Thanks to this inner solitude, this interior and exterior silence, they will be able to hear the secret words spoken by our Lord. What an effective means this will be for advancing in virtue.

Finally, there remains the great lesson of humility that Jesus gives us in the Blessed Sacrament. What a mystery of love! Jesus, the Word made flesh, is supreme grandeur, the King of the universe, the One who has an unquestionable right to all the homage we can give, to every kind of triumph. Yet what a spectacle he offers to the eyes of men! When he came down to earth to fulfill his divine mission of salvation he was born, he lived and died in the profoundest humility. He knew abasement, abjection, outrage, opprobrium. He drank to the dregs the chalice of this world's bitterness, derision, humiliation. The necessary manifestations of his power during his public life lasted only a short time; whereas his

hidden life stretched over thirty years. After the disgraceful and ignominious treatment meted out to him during his Passion, he expired in shame on the cross. The eloquent words of St. Paul on this subject spring to mind. But what do we see in the Eucharist? A God even more abased, more humbled, more hidden than he was in Bethlehem, Nazareth, or on the cross. He is a thousand times more abased in the Host than he was as a victim on Calvary. He is in a state of mystical death. "His life is entirely hidden from creatures, who can see only the poor, insignificant species of bread and wine." Jesus is as though wrapped in the white shroud of the Host. By accepting the conditions of this hidden and humiliated life, he condemned himself to receive from men "scorn, injuries, indignities, profanations, sacrileges" which he endures without complaint. Faced with such an example, the religious says to herself, "I want to imitate my good Master. I too wish to take up the practice of humility, that very difficult virtue. I shall never again try to parade my superiority before anyone. I must imitate the hidden life of my Savior. So, I shall try to keep myself from view, and I will have no greater joy than to let others see in me only that which is most defective and least estimable." I want to hide myself "beneath the ashes of humility"; I shall face up to scorn and rejection from creatures; I shall admit "that everyone has a right to accuse, to humiliate me, and make me suffer. I shall avoid excusing myself or complaining. Thus I shall be able in some small measure to relieve and console the heart of my divine Master."

Such were indeed the admirable sentiments of Margaret Mary. Such was her life: a victim life, a life of immolation, of constant and sublime imitation of Jesus in the Blessed

Sacrament. Here again we can say that Margaret Mary lived by the Eucharist.

Christian souls, devout souls, religious souls, strive in your turn to model yourself as far as you can on the Saint's imitation of Jesus in the Host.

Chapter 6

How Margaret Mary Lived for the Eucharist

LOVE CALLS for the apostolate. *Qui non zelat non amat.* "He who has no zeal has no love" declares St. Augustine. We have seen how Margaret Mary lived with the Eucharist and by the Eucharist. Now we must set forth how she lived for the Eucharist. The eucharistic apostolate of Margaret Mary is the beautiful and interesting subject which we must now treat of. We shall examine this apostolate from a double point of view: first in general; and then in some of the particular ways it showed itself. We shall study in turn the mission of Margaret Mary and the main characteristics of her apostolate: first, reparation; then the promotion of the feast of the Sacred Heart; communion on nine successive First Fridays; the Holy Hour; and the building of a church in honor of the Sacred Heart.

1. Margaret Mary's Mission

St. Margaret Mary received from our Lord the express commission to propagate devotion to his divine Heart. Any number of quotations are available to show this.

After relating to Father Croizet the vision she had experienced on the feast of St. John the Evangelist, she adds:

“He made me understand that his great desire to be perfectly loved by men had led him to decide to show them his heart, and to open to them all the treasures of love, mercy, grace, sanctification and salvation contained in it, so that all those who would pay him and cause to be paid to him all the love and worship possible, would be enriched profusely with these divine treasures of which his Sacred Heart is the source. He assured me that he enjoyed a singular pleasure when he was honored under the figure of this heart of flesh; he wanted images of it exposed in public. Afterwards, he spoke to me in more or less the following words: ‘See, my daughter, the design for which I have chosen you; this is why I have given you such great graces and taken such special care of you from your cradle onwards. I made myself your Master and Director only to prepare you to receive all these great graces; you ought to consider this as one of the choicest, for by it I am showing and giving to you the greatest of all treasures, by showing you and giving you my heart.’ ”

In another letter to Father Croizet she says: “From the start my divine Master made known to his unworthy slave that he had chosen her as a worthless instrument to establish (this devotion) and lead hearts to love his adorable heart which yearns so ardently to be known, loved and honored by men through special homage and practices, so that he may grant them in abundance his mercy and his sanctifying and salvation-bringing graces.”

“And as I kept telling him that this was something quite impossible for me to do, because I was more likely to be an obstacle than a help in carrying out his designs, he answered that I did not stop to think that, being all-powerful, he could do whatever he wanted, and that in this matter he did not

wish to make use of human means, but only of the sweet attraction of his love; that I should fear nothing, since he would make up for everything I lacked; and that he had chosen a certain number of faithful friends whom he would make known to me."

Margaret Mary had received directly from the Savior this official mission of establishing and propagating the devotion to the Sacred Heart. She did indeed put her every effort into corresponding with the orders and plans of her divine Master.

Jesus insistently told her, "If you only knew how I long to make myself loved by men, you would spare nothing to cause them to do so." "I thirst, I burn with desire to be loved."

The Saint cries out, "Into what an abyss of confusion and humiliation will I not be plunged! But no matter what happens to me, provided that the heart of my loving Jesus may be known and loved, and may reign. That is all I want."

Indeed, nothing seems to cost her anything; she is ready to endure all temptations, to triumph over all obstacles. She prays, suffers, mortifies herself, plunges into the bitterest sacrifices; she understands that this is the basis for all true apostolate, and the source of its fecundity. Nor do her efforts stop there. Although so timid, so eager to be unnoticed, so avid for silence, she finds ways of multiplying her activity. She speaks, writes, acts, stirs up devotedness; she encourages others' efforts; she thanks those who help to propagate her beloved devotion. Her zeal is unflagging, full of ardor and confidence. She becomes the soul of an admirable crusade in favor of the designs of the Sacred Heart.

But I seem to hear an objection: You set out to show

us Margaret Mary's eucharistic apostolate, and you are speaking about her zeal to propagate devotion to the Sacred Heart. The objection is easy to answer. We need only refer to what was written at the beginning, when we discussed the relationships in fact and in law between devotion to the Sacred Heart and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. We showed their deep affinities, their admirable connections. The worship of the Sacred Heart as our Saint received it from Jesus himself, has a definitely eucharistic character. Recall the poignant complaints and the eager requests addressed by the divine Master to his humble servant. The solemn feast of the Sacred Heart, with its program of reparation; the communions in reparation on First Fridays; the Holy Hour; the acts of solemn and public amends, and the desire that a temple be built and dedicated to the Sacred Heart; all this is unquestionable proof that in propagating devotion to the Sacred Heart, Margaret Mary, by the very fact, labored powerfully to bring about the love, consolation and glorification of Jesus in the Host.

2. Reparation Offered to the Sacred Heart.

The Saint's Own Words

"Then, showing me his divine heart, he said, 'Behold this heart which has loved men so much, which has spared nothing and exhausted itself and consumed itself to show them its love; in return, all I receive from most of them is ingratitude, shown by their irreverence and sacrileges, and by their coldness and disrespect for me in this sacrament of love.' "

"Therefore, I ask that a special feast be celebrated on the first Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi, to honor my heart and make amends to it; you shall receive communion on that day to make up for the indignities I have suffered during the time I was exposed on the altar.' "

"I felt so sorry for him that I did not know what to do except to shed abundant tears; but this only increased my sorrow. The one who was the object of this sorrow made me understand that it was like that of the poor souls in Purgatory, who suffer from the privation of the Sovereign Good; for in spite of this ardent desire which consumed me, my divine Master showed me my unworthiness to give him lodging in my heart; and this was not a slighter suffering than the former, which made me want to draw near to him."

"Once, when I was accompanying the Blessed Sacrament that they were bringing to a sick Sister, I saw this all-good Jesus turn aside from the direction in which he was being carried. He said to the one who was carrying him, 'Stop! You are forcing me; I am being compelled!' How I wished that all those present could have heard this penetrating voice and been touched by it. I wept bitterly over this. Showing himself to me, he said, 'Let me rest in your heart, and take some repose from the violence that I have been willing to suffer for your love.' "

"On another occasion, having been overcome by a numbing fear to approach holy communion lest I dishonor my Savior, but not having obtained permission from my Superioress (to omit the communion), I was going to receive him with great sorrow in my heart; I trembled with fear at the thought of what my Savior was going to experience in some of the hearts which were about to receive him. After

communion he showed himself to me as an 'Ecce Homo,' torn and disfigured, and said, 'I have found nobody willing to give me a place of rest in this suffering and sorrowful condition I am in.' This vision caused me such bitter sorrow that death would have been a thousand times sweeter to me than to see my Savior in this state. He added, 'If you only knew who treated me like this your sorrow would be far greater. Five souls consecrated to my service have dealt with me thus; I was dragged forcibly as with cords into a narrow space studded with nails and thorns; that is how I got into this condition.' "

"Once after holy communion, he said to me, 'Daughter, what would you prefer: to receive me worthily, and afterwards be admitted to Paradise; or to be deprived of communion if it were for my greater glory, and after that see Hell swallow you up?' My love instantly made its decision, and I replied with all the intensity my soul could muster, 'O Lord, open before me the mouth of Hell, and you will see that my desire to glorify you will make me hurl myself into it,' so sad did I feel to think that this bread of life was eaten unworthily. After that he made me witness the harsh treatment he received in a soul where I saw him as if bound and trodden under foot. He said to me with a sad voice, 'Behold how sinners treat me.' Another time he made me contemplate the way he acted in a heart which was resisting his love. He kept his hands on his ears and shut his eyes saying, 'I will not listen to what he says to me; I will not look upon his misery so that my heart may not be touched and show him his heart as clearly as I see it.' "

"Once, when I was preparing for holy communion, I heard a voice which said to me, 'Look, my daughter, and see

the ill treatment I am getting in this soul which has just received me. She has renewed all the sufferings of my Passion.' I threw myself at his feet, full of fear and sorrow; I bathed them with my tears which I could not hold back, and said, 'My Lord and my God, if my life can be of any use to make up for these outrages—even though the ones you get from me are a thousand times worse — see, I am your slave; do with me what you will.' He answered, 'Every time that I show you the ill-treatment I receive from that soul, I want you, after you have received me, to prostrate yourself at my feet and to offer to my eternal Father the bloody sacrifice of the cross for this purpose; offer your whole being to pay homage to mine and to repair the indignity I receive in that heart.' I remained amazed at hearing this about a soul which had just been washed in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. A moment later I heard the same voice say, 'It is not that she is in sin; but she is still ready to commit sin. This will to sin is still in her heart; she is applying my blood to a corrupt heart, through contempt, since a will that accepts evil is the root of all corruption, and is incapable of deriving any benefit (from my blood).' At these words I suffered much; I constantly begged our Lord to have mercy. One Easter, after I had received him he told me, 'I have heard your pleadings; I have shown my mercy to that soul.' "

"But she (i.e. Margaret Mary herself) experienced a much greater joy when she was able to receive this God of love who was the delight of her soul, so great was her desire for her beloved. She could speak only of her divine spouse, and of the yearning which consumed her to unite herself to this divine Heart. This is what she spoke about to the Sisters in the Novitiate; they were fortunate to hear her give voice

to her ardent desires; and she addressed them thus in order to incite them to love him ever more ardently. 'My dear Sisters,' she said, 'this is all we have to do: to know, love and serve God. Your task is to love his heart. But what joy is yours when you can say: Yes, I shall love him and praise him for all eternity. For this you must love him constantly and equally in affliction and in consolation, and in all the events of life.'

"She inspired them with a great longing for holy communion. She wanted them to receive it with love and confidence, but also with a holy fear. She recommended to them not to receive communion without offering to our Lord the sacrifice of their own inclinations and the victory over their passions, saying that renouncement of self is better than all our self-chosen devotions."

"On the Friday during the octave of Corpus Christi after communion Jesus said to me, 'Daughter, I came to you to put my soul in the place of yours, my heart and my Spirit in the place of yours, so that you may live only by me and for me.' This grace was so effective that since then nothing has been able to trouble, even in the slightest, the peace of my soul; and I felt no capacity for anything but love."

"Another Friday, after communion (I had received a Host that had been used for exposition), he said to me, 'Daughter, I come down into the heart which I gave you, so that by its love you may make amends to me for the injuries that I received from these tepid and cowardly hearts which dishonor me in the Blessed Sacrament. Offer this soul which I gave you to God the Father, to avert the punishments that these unfaithful souls deserved; and by my Spirit you must adore him unceasingly in truth, to compensate for all these

insincere persons who adore him only in a dishonest manner, and with false appearances; it is for my chosen people that I have given you such a great gift.' "

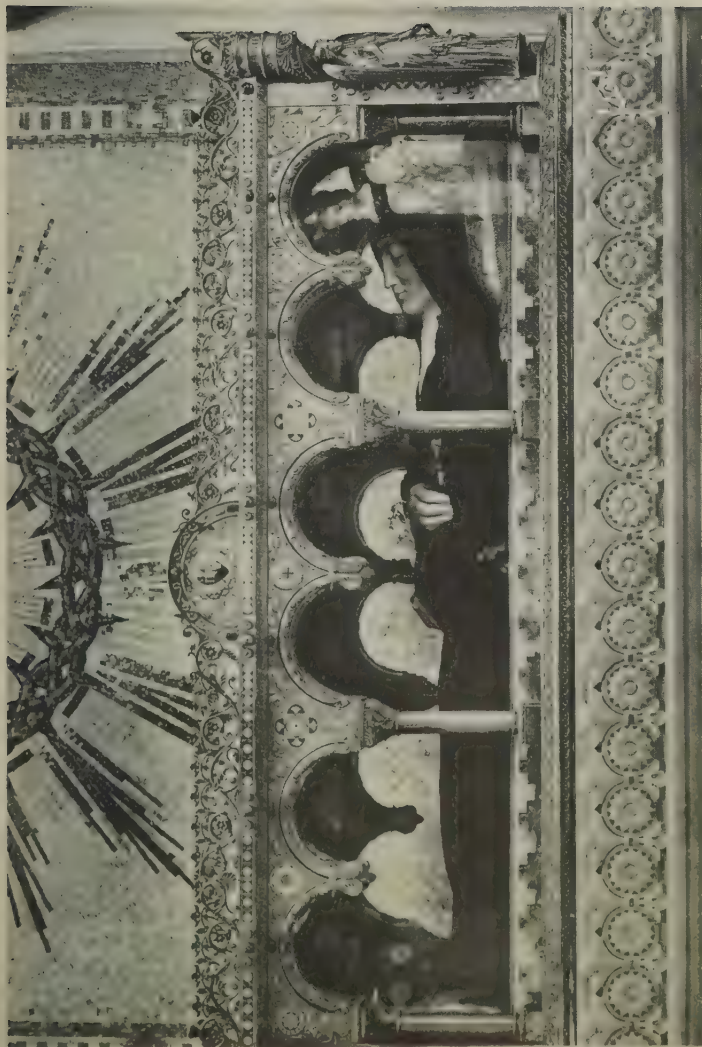
"Here are the signs given me by our Lord himself, to discern the Holy Spirit. He said that this Spirit which guides me and rules me with sovereign sway would lead me

- to love my Savior Jesus Christ with an extreme love;
- to obey perfectly, after the example of Jesus Christ;
- to suffer constantly for the love of Jesus Christ;
- to want to suffer without being noticed, if possible;
- to have an insatiable thirst for holy communion and for remaining in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament."

"It seems to me that all these graces have produced their marvelous effects in me up to now. Furthermore, I have come to see more clearly than daylight that life without the love of Jesus Christ is the most miserable existence one can possibly have."

"This caused me to suffer more than all the other griefs I spoke of before; and it was then that the loving heart of Jesus appeared to me with these words: 'I ardently thirst to be honored and loved by men in the most Blessed Sacrament; yet I find hardly anyone who tries to quench this thirst of mine by giving me some little return of love.'"

"No, I do not forget you either in my prayers to the Lord; he makes life bitter for me, so that there is no satisfaction for me except that of seeing the heart of my adorable Savior reign. He sends me some extraordinary suffering every time this devotion spreads a little further. But there is nothing I would not be willing to do and to suffer for this; all the bitterest trials are sweet in this adorable Heart, where every-



Paray-le-Monial. Monastery of the Visitation. Reliquary of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

thing is changed into love. My greatest sorrow is to think that I am an obstacle to his designs; this often makes me wish to die. It seems to me that by my infidelity I draw down all sorts of calamities which I see happening; and what makes me suffer even more is that I cannot expiate the outrages which are perpetrated on my divine Savior in the most Blessed Sacrament."

"N sends her greetings, and asked me to assure you of her deep affection. She was in distress at not being able to make herself useful to the Sacred Heart; but he gave her something to do: He made her a 'mediatrix' who must implore the eternal Father to make the Sacred Heart known, who must beseech the Holy Spirit to make it loved; who must beg the most Blessed Virgin to intercede so that the Sacred Heart may show the effects of his power in all those who turn to him. He would like to have another 'mediatrix' of the same kind in your convent; but he wants her to be chosen by lot; he says that the one so chosen will be blessed indeed, for he will be her Mediator. He also asks for someone to be a 'reparation-offerer,' someone who will very humbly implore God's pardon for all the insults offered him in the Blessed Sacrament; she can confide herself very humbly to him, and she will obtain grace and pardon."

Reflections

When our Lord left the Cenacle, he certainly had every right to expect that the Eucharist would be recognized, honored, loved, paid assiduous worship by all. Alas! His divine prescience showed him in advance the history of the sad real-

ity which would so wound his heart. The revelations our Lord made to St. Margaret Mary on this point are very significant indeed. She has made known to us the complaints Christ addressed to her about this.

He carried his love to the utmost limits when he instituted the Eucharist. This is the supreme gift of his loving heart. He so thirsts to be loved by men in his sacrament of love; but so few think of quenching this thirst of his; so few are willing to return him love for love! "Behold this Heart which has loved men so much, which has spared nothing and has exhausted and consumed itself to show them its love; and yet from most of them all I receive is ingratitude. . . ." Instead of homage and gratitude, only irreverence, coldness, contempt, sacrileges. When she tells us about the evil treatment inflicted on Jesus by souls guilty of sacrilegious communions, her eloquence rises to pathetic heights. In a most impressive series of visions the Savior seems to have tried to arouse the pity of his humble servant. When he is being carried to an unworthy communicant she sees Jesus turning his face aside and pleading not to be forced to go. With a voice that stirs her soul, plaintive in tone, heartbreaking in its poignancy so that it fills her eyes with tears, he cries: "Stop forcing me! I am being compelled!" Again, our Lord shows himself to Margaret Mary as the 'Ecce Homo'; exhausted, covered with thorns, all covered with blood. He tells her that it is sinners who have brought him to such a state. What tortures does he not endure in hearts ill-prepared to receive him in communion. It is as though he were dragged by cords through a narrow passageway studded with nails and thorns. It is as though he were tightly bound and trampled under foot. Sacrilegious souls renew on him all the torments of his

Passion. "Willingness to sin is even worse than the act of sinning; because the choosing of evil is the root of all corruption." So Jesus is bound to show himself most rigorous towards these guilty souls. He stops his ears with his hands, so to speak, so as not to hear them; he shuts his eyes so as not to see them. These moving revelations made by our Lord to Margaret Mary concerning the unworthy communions made by certain souls plunged her into total consternation, provoked mortal anguish in her heart, and drew torrents of bitter tears from her eyes. She thought she was about to faint, to expire. She would have wished to die a thousand times rather than to have to listen to the pitiful voice of her Master. This was why Jesus could ask her anything he wished. She was ready to do anything to console him, to comfort him, to make up by her love for the ingratitude he suffered in the adorable sacrament of the altar. With pious and touching eagerness she cried out: "Come, O my Savior, and take refuge in my heart; let it be for you a shelter where you will be shielded from the insults and outrages which pursue you. Let it be for you a real haven of rest."

One cannot help being surprised on reading the strange alternative proposed to her by our Lord: to receive communion unworthily and then be admitted to Paradise, or to give up communion through a spirit of reparation, and throw herself into the flames of Hell. With spontaneous promptitude our Saint replied, "Open that dread abyss, Lord, and I will leap into it." Such was the admirable heroism of her love and holiness. As may easily be imagined, Margaret Mary succeeded in inspiring her own sentiments in those around her, especially in her novices. She exhorted them to receive communion as often as possible, and as fervently as

possible. Nothing pleases Satan better, she assured them, than to see people stay away from communion. She took no account of all the humiliations and sufferings she endured, provided she could be faithful to the communion of reparation on ordinary Fridays and especially on First Fridays. Jesus himself required this of her. She did everything she could to spread this salutary practice. We see this in the letters she wrote to her former Superioresses, to other nuns she knew, and very specially to Father Croizet. She tried to organize in all the Visitation monasteries what she called "the officers of the Sacred Heart." In each house two such "officers" were to be chosen by lot; one was to be a 'mediatrix,' the other was in charge of offering reparation, of asking Jesus' pardon for the outrages he received in the Blessed Sacrament. With this in mind she wrote to Mother Greyfié, Superioress at Semur-en-Auxois. She tells us that her biggest suffering was not being able to avenge on herself the injuries offered to the Blessed Sacrament.

What a model for every soul that wishes to offer reparation! What an ideal for eucharistic reparation! Religious, pious, Christian souls, come and learn from our Saint. Take your rightful part in this great task of offering reparation. You know the many groups existing today, the purpose of which is to console the Heart of Jesus by offering him expiation and reparation. Understand the importance of, and the need for, communions in reparation, and for perpetual adoration. Even if you do not belong to any special association, introduce into all your eucharistic practices—Mass, communions, visits to the Blessed Sacrament—this touching note of reparation. Propose to yourself in all you do, to offer Jesus, slighted and outraged in the sacrament of his love, the due

tribute of compensation, the grateful homage of your love, the delicate consolation of your apologies for your brethren.

3. The Feast of the Sacred Heart.

"In St. Margaret Mary," observes Father Bainvel, "there is the seeress, the devout client of the Sacred Heart, the evangelist and apostle of the Sacred Heart. But these roles are not distinct in her. She lives for her mission; her visions aim principally at promoting her apostolate; her devotion is the inner flame which burns within her and seeks to break out. It was to make her the apostle of his Sacred Heart that our Lord, as he himself told her, had prepared her so carefully and had filled her with such an abundance of grace."

In this task of her apostolate, to help her carry out her mission, our Lord sent her many valuable helpers: St. Claude de la Colombière, Mother Greyfié, Mother de Saumaise, both of whom had been her Superioresses at Paray; Mother de Soudeilles at Moulins; Mother Desharres and Sister Joly at Dijon; M. Charollais, the chaplain of the Dijon Visitation; M. Amat, Vicar General of Langres; various Jesuits; Father Rolin, Father de Gette; and especially Father Croizet, to mention only the principal ones. Margaret Mary found far and wide a great many zealous collaborators. Her love led her to try to answer all our Lord's requests. In particular, she strove very diligently to promote the institution of a feast in honor of the Sacred Heart.

In the great, triumphal apparition of June 16, 1675, our Lord had told her, "I ask you that the first Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi be consecrated to a special feast

in honor of my heart. Receive communion on that day, and offer it in reparation to my divine heart; make amends to me for all the indignities which I suffered while I was exposed on the altar. . . . I promise you that my heart will pour itself out in abundant graces of divine love on those who thus celebrate this feast, and who by their words and example will cause it to be celebrated by others.”

As we previously remarked, this great apparition of 1675 shows a very pronounced eucharistic character, on account of the circumstances of the time and place in which it occurred. Margaret Mary was in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament at the time. It was during the octave of Corpus Christi. Jesus complained of the ingratitude shown him in the sacrament of his love. He insistently asked for a feast on which homage and reparation would be offered him for the outrages he endured during the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. It is no exaggeration to say that the feast of the Sacred Heart is obviously a eucharistic feast of reparation. Consequently, working for the institution, the celebration of this feast, is working for the glorification of Christ in the Host. In this way again, Margaret Mary lived for the Eucharist. We all know the long-drawn-out procedure required; the difficulties, the opposition, even the hostility that she met with; and when the matter finally got to Rome, long and prudent delays intervened before the feast of the Sacred Heart was finally approved and definitely established in the Universal Church.

On March 30, 1697, the Sacred Congregation of Rites issued a Decree which authorized the Mass of the Five Wounds on the feast of the Sacred Heart which was celebrated in all Visitation monasteries; and in 1698 Pope Inno-

cent XII permitted the celebration of the new feast of the Sacred Heart in all the churches of the Order.

In 1765 Clement XIII sanctioned its celebration, with a proper Mass and Office, under the rite of double-major, in a number of specific churches. In 1856 Pius IX, acting on the unanimous request of the French Bishops, extended this favor to the Universal Church. Finally, in 1889 Leo XIII raised the feast to the rank of double of the first class. In addition, all the Bishops of France made a vow in 1917 to have celebrated perpetually in all the churches and chapels of their dioceses the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the day he had requested.

From her throne in Heaven Margaret Mary had followed all these vicissitudes, these successive advances, these triumphs. Jesus had kept his word. As he had promised her, he did reign in spite of all his enemies. But during the last years of her life our Saint had been able to witness only the first preliminaries of the establishment of devotion to the Sacred Heart, only a preview of the celebration of the feast dedicated to the divine Heart. The fact remains, however, that she was the soul of this vast apostolic movement which was then getting under way. Failures did not disconcert her. She knew how to rekindle the zeal and courage of her helpers; and when she heard some good news she thrilled with holy joy.

Great was the zeal she showed in attending Mass in honor of the Sacred Heart, in having Masses said in its honor, in inspiring people to set up Mass foundations for the same intention. But what she longed for most of all was to see the feast of the Sacred Heart celebrated on the very day our Lord himself had chosen, with a proper Mass and Office.

In 1686 she wrote to Mother de Saumaise: "Do everything you can so that this Mass of the Sacred Heart may be said in his honor; and if you could obtain some indulgences for the feast day, that would further our enterprise a great deal; I hope you will continue to take interest in it. Let us do everything we can; as for myself I weep to say so, but I am more of a hindrance than a help, because of my sinful life. Sometimes this makes me wish I could die, so that his divine heart might be better known, loved, and glorified."

The ceremony organized by the novices on her feast day—St. Margaret's, July 20, 1685—and the one prepared in the choir of the monastery by Sister des Escures on June 20, 1686, the octave of Corpus Christi, brought great joy to our Saint. She was also very happy on receiving the little booklet composed by Sister Joly and M. Charollais, the confessor of the Dijon Visitation. Among other things, this booklet contained the proper Mass of the Sacred Heart. It had been printed secretly in 1686, and sent to the Superioress of the Visitation monastery in Rome, with the request that she take the steps necessary to have it approved. It was then that Margaret Mary wrote to Mother de Saumaise, in April, 1687, "Well, my dear Mother, what shall we say now about our all-loving Jesus? Never have I experienced more of his merciful goodness, and never have I felt myself less capable of expressing it, or my joy at the sight of the precious little books which, I hope, will contribute much to the spreading of his kingdom. Congratulations for your success in what you have undertaken for his glory. By this he shows you the pleasure he takes in all this, and the desire he has of seeing you continue working at such a worthy task until it is completed."

However, Rome did not approve either the Mass of the Sacred Heart, or the booklet of prayers by Sister Joly. What a disappointment! They had been so sure of success. Here is how Margaret Mary consoled Mother de Saumaise. In a letter dated August, 1688, she says: "Your kind heart is grieved by the news from Rome about the refusal to give in to the desires of the Heart of Jesus; it seems to me that he wants me to console you with a message from him, the same that he gave to me. When I heard this sad news which went through my heart like a sword, I went and knelt before his image to complain to him. Here is what he answered me: 'Why do you bewail what will turn to my greater glory? After this, people will honor and love me with nothing more than my Providence and their own love to rely on. This pleases me very much. But as this fervor may die down—something that would be very painful to my heart, the burning furnace of pure love—it will be time then to rekindle it in hearts; and this I will do with these privileges (the ones that had been refused by Rome), and greater ones yet. So, remain at peace.' " This is what I have been doing; I am not letting all this disturb me, regardless of what people say, and in spite of the fact that I wonder whether I shall ever enjoy this great consolation. But that does not really matter, so long as HE is satisfied; I shall be happy with his happiness, even if this is all I have. This is what I wanted to tell you, my dear Mother; let it all work out for his glory."

All this refers no doubt to a second refusal of approbation by Rome, since there had been a previous request presented in 1686. Margaret Mary did not live to see the triumph predicted and promised by our Lord. Still, even while

she still lived, Bishops in various places had authorized the celebration of a feast in honor of the Sacred Heart.

One of the first to do so was the Bishop of Langres. For the first time the Mass of the Sacred Heart was sung in the church of the Visitation at Dijon during the octave of the feast of St. Francis de Sales in 1689. On this occasion the Saint wrote to Father Croizet: "His Excellency the Bishop of Langres has authorized the feast of the Sacred Heart in his diocese; the proper Mass can be used, and the choir of the Sainte Chapelle came and sang it in our Sisters' church at Dijon. I am telling you all this to show you the progress being made, thanks to his infinite goodness, so that you may join me in thanking him for it."

On June 17 of that same year, 1689, on the Friday following the octave of Corpus Christi, the feast of the Sacred Heart was again celebrated, and in a transport of joy Margaret Mary hastened to give the good news to Mother de Saumaise. "O my dear Mother, why are we not totally consumed with the love of this divine heart of our Savior, after all the graces he has given us, and which are like so many devouring flames of his pure love that ought to make us burn unceasingly with a desire to show him perfect gratitude and faithful correspondence with his designs? In spite of Satan, his Heart will reign! This thought fills me with joy, and affords me the greatest comfort. But I could never express adequately the great graces and benedictions which this procures for our Institute, and especially for the houses which give him the most honor and glory."

We have here, certainly, beautiful and convincing manifestations of St. Margaret Mary's apostolate for the feast of the Sacred Heart, and especially for the celebration of the

proper Mass of the Sacred Heart. Once again we can see for ourselves that her apostolate is preeminently eucharistic. May we profit by these eloquent lessons. May the feast of the Sacred Heart be for us one of the great solemnities of the year. May we use every means in our power to encourage a great number of souls to follow us in showing our fervor.

4. The Great Promise

Our Lord did not only put requests to Margaret Mary; he also deigned to make promises to her. Among these, some refer to her personally; others concern all souls of good will who try to correspond with the desires of the good Master. We have already had occasion to point out the precious favors granted to our Saint to reward her for her incomparable devotion toward the Blessed Sacrament. Likewise, we have mentioned the abundant blessings that Jesus is glad to pour forth on persons who receive communion often and well. We must now say something about what has come to be known as "the Great Promise."

In a letter to Mother de Saumaise, dated May, 1688, we read the following lines: "One Friday, after communion, our Lord said these words to his unworthy slave, if she is not mistaken: 'In the exceeding mercy of my heart I promise you that its all powerful love will grant to all those who receive communion on nine consecutive First Fridays, the grace of final repentance; they will not die in my disgrace, or without receiving the last sacraments; my divine heart will make itself their sure refuge in their last moments.' "

It is not our intention to analyze the terms of this prom-

ise, nor to determine its precise contents, nor to specify the conditions required for its fulfillment. All this has been done before, and we do not need to cover this ground again. Such is not our purpose. We simply wish to recall the fact that our Savior promised the grace of a happy death to all those who have received communion worthily on nine consecutive First Fridays. Jansenism was going to lead people away from the holy table; our Lord wanted to counteract in advance the baleful effects of this diabolical teaching.

His greatest desire is to see the faithful receive communion as often as possible. So, to induce them to do so he makes promises. He wants frequent communion; he wants First Friday communions; and to this last practice he attaches, in his all-powerful mercy the unspeakable favor which we are now discussing.

Margaret Mary shared all the intentions and sentiments of her adorable Master. We know how ardently she desired him to be known, loved and received in the sacrament of his love. One can therefore understand why she showed such zeal, such eager joy, in making known to her beloved confidant, her former Superioress, Mother de Saumaise, all the consoling things our Lord had told her. She could not help but feel that, after this, many souls would be won over to the love of the holy Eucharist, and that they would do everything to receive communion often, since it gives them Jesus, the Lord of eternal glory in Heaven.

From Heaven where she stands near to Jesus, how happy she must be to know that the practice of communion on the nine First Fridays has become a major element in the current of piety toward the Sacred Heart. What great profit do souls not draw from this. And what a blessing it is for

the parishes where, through this practice, Christian life has been revived.

5. The Holy Hour.

The Holy Hour is, so to speak, the choicest flower of devotion to the Sacred Heart. It associates us with the agony of our Lord in the Garden of Olives. It enables us to carry out, with regard to Jesus, the delicate and touching mission of the consoling angel. It is especially suited to captivate generous and loving hearts; even in less fervent souls it can stir up the most salutary and deep-seated emotions. Our Savior himself asked for this exercise of reparation and expiation in an apparition in 1674.

“Once, when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, I felt myself deeply recollected in my inmost soul. Jesus Christ, my Good Master, showed himself to me in all his glory; his five wounds shone like five suns; and from his sacred humanity flames shot in every direction, especially from his sacred breast, which resembled a burning furnace. Then it opened, and I beheld his loving heart from which all these flames sprang. He unveiled before me the marvelous secrets of his pure love, and showed me how excessively he had loved men, from whom he received only ingratitude and indifference. ‘I feel this more keenly than all the sufferings I endured in my Passion,’ he said; ‘if they only returned my love a little, I would consider as nothing all I did for them, and I would, if it were possible, do even more. But all they show me is coldness and neglect, in return for all my eagerness to do them good. Do what you can to make up for their ingratitude.’ When I reminded him of how powerless I was, he an-

swered, 'Here, with this you can make up for all you lack.' Just then his divine heart opened, and a flame shot forth from it, so scorching that I thought it would consume me. I was fully enveloped by it, and could not stand it any longer; so I begged him to have pity on my weakness. 'I will be your strength,' he told me; 'don't be afraid, but listen to my voice and do what I ask you so that you may be prepared to accomplish my designs. First, you must receive me in holy communion as often as obedience will permit, whatever mortifications and humiliations this may involve for you; accept these as pledges of my love. You must, in addition, go to communion on every First Friday of the month; each week, during the night from Thursday to Friday I will give you a share in the mortal sadness which I condescended to endure in the Garden of Olives. This sadness will cause you a sort of agony which you will not be able to understand; you will find it more difficult to bear than death itself. To accompany me in this humble prayer which I then offered to my Father in the midst of my agony, you will get up between eleven o'clock and midnight, and prostrate yourself in prayer with me for an hour, to appease God's anger and to beg for mercy for sinners; and also to alleviate in some measure the bitterness I felt when I was abandoned by my Apostles. I had to reproach them with not having been able to watch for an hour with me; and during this hour you will do what I show you.' "

As is evident, the Holy Hour is not in itself a eucharistic devotion; but it has touchingly intimate connections with the Eucharist. St. Margaret Mary was praying before the Blessed Sacrament exposed when our Lord asked for this. His request for the Holy Hour came immediately after he

had asked her to receive communion frequently and on First Fridays. Furthermore, as we have mentioned, is not the Agony in the Garden a sort of sublime link between the Cenacle and Calvary, between the institution of the holy Eucharist and the sacrifice of the cross, between the first Mass at the Last Supper and the bloody sacrifice of Golgotha? Hence, these few pages on the Holy Hour do fit in very well with the theme of this book.

As we may well imagine, St. Margaret Mary eagerly complied with our Savior's appeal. Really, our Lord appears here as her true and only Teacher, in instructing her about the Holy Hour. He tells her not only what attitude of soul she should have when she fulfills this sublime role of compassion which he expects of her; he even indicates the posture of her body: she must prostrate herself on the ground, recite five Our Fathers and Hail Marys, repeat five times the act of adoration he taught her, to pay homage to the overpowering anguish he endured on the night of his Passion.

Such visions ought to be verified; and these were. Heaven did not hesitate to make miracles to prove the authenticity of the request made by Christ to the faithful disciple of his heart. Mother de Saumaise, who at the time was Margaret Mary's Superioress, showed nothing but scorn for everything the Saint told her on this subject. Eager as she was for humiliations, Margaret Mary simply said, "This consoled me a great deal." Then she awaited the sign of God's will. At this time she was in poor health; and Mother de Saumaise ordered her to ask our Lord to cure her, promising that if she got well she could not only go to communion on First Fridays, but also make the hour of adoration on Thursday

nights. The Saint obeyed, and asked for her cure. She obtained it immediately.

Later, in 1678, when Mother Greyfié was elected Superioress of the monastery of Paray, the Holy Spirit inspired her to find out for herself the facts about the extraordinary happenings in the life of the Servant of God. She began by forbidding Margaret Mary to make the Holy Hour. This displeased our Lord; and he said so to St. Margaret Mary; the latter was afraid that God would punish the Superioress and told her so. The event did not delay in coming. On October 14, 1678, in particularly painful circumstances for her, Mother Greyfié lost one of her promising young nuns, Sister Marie Elizabeth Quarre. The Superioress recognized in this death the punishment that Margaret Mary had warned her about; she hastened to allow her to make the Holy Hour once more.

Never did the Saint weary of this practice, so sure was she that her divine Master wanted her to be faithful to it. She shared more and more closely in the sufferings of the divine Victim bearing the sins of the world.

If every Thursday night was filled with bitter-sweet consolations for her, what shall we say of Holy Thursday night? Often, Sister Alacoque spent the entire night before the Blessed Sacrament; what adoration was hers! Once, when she had spent all the time from seven at night until seven next morning rapt in prayer, she later admitted to Mother Greyfié "that our Lord had given her the grace to share in his agony in the garden; and that she had suffered so much that at one point she thought her soul was leaving her body." "*Sine dolore non vivitur in amore*" — "There is no living in love without suffering."

In 1690 Mother de Lévy-Chateaumorand, seeing Margaret Mary so weak, forbade her to make the Holy Hour any more. She obeyed; but what a sacrifice it was for her during her last months on this earth.

Margaret Mary, then, showed admirable fidelity in carrying out her role of consoling angel with regard to our Lord. It does not appear that she was told to spread this practice during her life. But her example led many others after her death to take up this pious practice. Today, many devout souls, not only religious but lay people as well, understand the need to offer reparation, and are happy to give to their Lord agonizing in Gethsemane the solace of their company. True, the Holy Hour can be performed anywhere; but what more appropriate and touching than to observe it before the Blessed Sacrament when it is solemnly and publicly exposed? How easy it is then to unite oneself with our Savior, to suffer with him, to weep with him, to bewail sin with him, in a word to fulfill with regard to him the role of the consoling angel.

6. A Temple Consecrated to the Sacred Heart.

Everyone knows about the great message that our Lord entrusted to St. Margaret Mary, to forward to King Louis XIV of France. We learn about this from two letters sent by the Saint to Mother de Saumaise in 1689. In them, as Father Hamon states, our Lord asked Louis XIV through Margaret Mary to help establish the new devotion at the court among the nobility. For this, he ought to practice it himself. The emblem of the Sacred Heart should appear on the King's stand-

ard and be engraved on his arms. Louis XIV was to build a temple where the image of the Sacred Heart would be venerated "by the King and the whole court"; further, he should intervene with the Holy See to obtain the approbation of the Mass in honor of the Sacred Heart. By doing all this the King would win for himself the protection of God "against all his visible and invisible enemies, and also against the enemies of the Church. Happy will he be," concluded the Saint, "if he takes to heart this devotion which will assure him a lasting, glorious reign in the Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This message has given rise to many spirited discussions. Since the canonization of Margaret Mary, it would seem that the matter has come somewhat closer to being settled. Rome has once again authenticated all the writings of the humble Visitandine of Paray, including the pages which concern this message to the King. Our confrere, Abbé Truptin, has published an interesting monograph on the subject which all those interested in verifying the facts can consult.

All we wish to mention here is the temple to be dedicated to the Sacred Heart. There does not exist a Catholic church without an altar on which the sacrifice of the Mass is offered, and on which formerly was found the tabernacle where Jesus resides in the Host. We know with what zeal Margaret Mary tried to have the message brought to the King. She would have been overjoyed if, during her life, the church requested by our Lord had been constructed, with the picture of the Sacred Heart in it; and if the King surrounded by his court had knelt before it and consecrated himself to the Sacred Heart.

Many obstacles prevented the carrying out of our Lord's

desires. But they were not forgotten for all that; and in her most tragic hours, in days of overwhelming crisis, France remembered the requests made long before to Louis XIV, and adopted them for herself. This is how after the disaster of 1870, the idea of the National Vow arose. Years passed, and the votive basilica in honor of the Sacred Heart stands today atop the hill of Montmartre, dominating the Paris skyline, lifting toward Heaven its multiple domes — a beautiful and majestic vision of pure white stone. It is the admirable center of national reparation; perhaps the most intense focus of eucharistic life in France. The Blessed Sacrament is adored there day and night; thousands of Masses are said every year; the holy table is besieged by throngs of the faithful; there, consecrations and acts of public reparation are constantly being made. Who can fail to admire and to bless the designs of divine Providence when he thinks that this vast movement which draws souls to the Holy Eucharist had its beginning in the revelations made at Paray le Monial by our Lord to his humble confidant, Margaret Mary? Montmartre is like a great river; Paray is like the source. The life and deeds of the Saint set in motion numberless imitations. Inside the monastic enclosure she succeeded in having a shrine built in honor of the Sacred Heart; it was dedicated on September 7, 1688. Today, count if you can all the basilicas and churches dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. They are found everywhere, radiant centers of eucharistic life. Most churches, even if not specially placed under the protection of the Sacred Heart have at least a statue consecrated to the worship of this divine Heart.

AT THE CANONIZATION ceremony of St. Margaret Mary Pope Benedict XV stated: "The apostolate of Margaret Mary Alacoque, in general, has not yet found among the faithful the response and favor that it should have. . . It seems to us that the full glorification of Margaret Mary has been reserved by God for such a time in which the mission entrusted to her to propagate the cult of the Sacred Heart will appear more extended and more accepted in the world, and on account richer in fruit."

Although that statement was made in 1920, it justifies the publication of this translation of a nearly antiquated French work. At this time when a smoke screen seems to have confused many in regards to Eucharistic worship, St. Margaret Mary recalls to us how vital the Sacramental Presence of Christ is in the pursuit of union with God.

—*From the Foreword*

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